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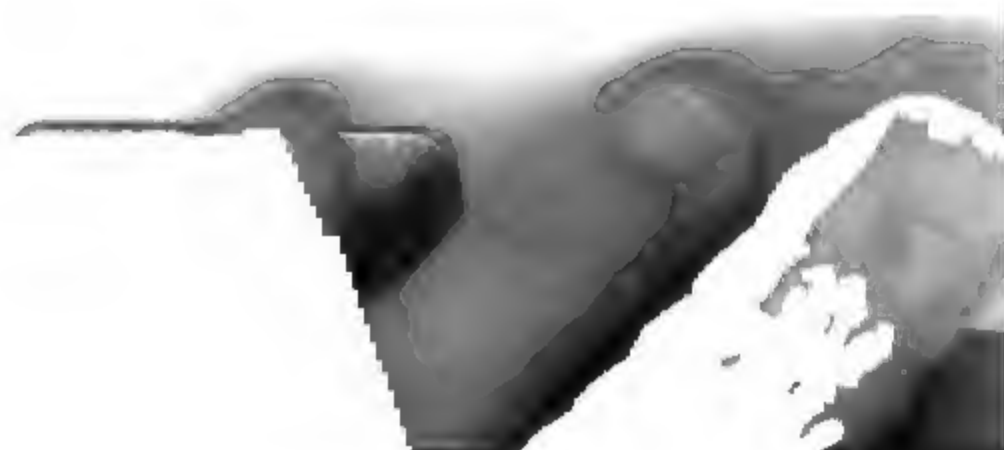
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1877.

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Heart of my Heart, through many a fretful hour  
I have gathered the fair jewels of thy strewing,  
Which now in fear unto the world I bring,  
Trembling lest that rough shell wherein they beam  
Dishonour thee; for mean its art and poor,  
Wrought painfully with sorrow-palsied hands.  
Yet, let the world take all, and for the gems  
Love thee, and haply guard "the casket" well,  
"Prizing the vessel for the wealth it holds."  
I will go back to that dear Land we loved,  
And lay mine ear to the bright shore, and bid  
The waves repeat old memories; and thy voice  
Will blend itself with murmurings of the sea;  
And I will tread our mountain-ways, and hear  
Its music in the winds amid the boughs  
And the white torrent's thunder; till the years,  
Rolling aloof their thickening clouds of woe,  
Leave me once more with boyhood's heaven, and thee.  
So may I soothe away this heaviness,  
And then fare forth to the long fight again.

G. F. A.

*August, 1877.*



## PREFACE.

**T**HERE are some to whom the introduction of this book will need no sentence of explanation or apology ; some for whom every line written, every word spoken, by him whose life it images, and every minutest fact of that life, has an interest, a meaning, an imperishable spell ; friends, loyal and devoted, of whose being he was the vivifying spirit, their light, the source of their energy, the impulse of their aspirations ; who by his severance from them have been left darkened and impoverished, to learn, year by year, how unlike they were to one whom they regarded as their fellow, how much of the borrowed riches of his nature they had lived by, and mistaken for their own. From these—and they are not few—I have had but two mandates to obey ; to give them all of him and about him that it was in my power to give, and not to fall below the dignity of my task. So far as it has seemed necessary, I have done the first ; and if I have failed in the latter, they will understand the

reason, and judge me accordingly. Outside this group there is a wider circle to whom excuses will be alike needless—old acquaintances, class-fellows, members of his University who united, twelve years ago, to do him honour in a way I, at least, shall never forget ; and readers of his Poems, here and there about the world, among whom his name has been for me a passport, often and often, where friendly greetings and talk of homely themes have been an unexpected sweetness. For these and such as these the book is primarily intended ; but, in order that it may reach even them, it must be subjected to the scrutiny and submitted to the criticism of some to whom, doubtless, his name is not so familiar, and with whom only the interest and honour of literature should be paramount. To them, perhaps, some introductory words are due, some explanation of its origin and occasion.

I have only, then, to say, that the apparent necessity for a new and enlarged edition of my brother's Poems called for a more minute history of his life than could well be prefixed to so considerable a volume ; and the brief Memorial Preface sketched by a friendly hand for the early edition, was never meant to be permanent, for it was written amidst peculiarly adverse circumstances, with a full consciousness that it could not be complete. In my brother's Letters, prompted by the feelings of the moment, or written to disburthen the mind of

thoughts in solitude, or to clear away doubts and perplexity, he had unconsciously left the elements of an autobiography ; and in a faithful picture of his life it seemed that these Letters should be the central feature. At the same time, many of the Letters had long appeared to possess in themselves a distinct and peculiar literary worth—to be for their own sakes entitled to preservation ; and without some chain of narrative it would be impossible to arrange them intelligibly ; and such narrative, however brief, no one but myself was in a position to construct. I had, therefore, no choice but to publish the Letters in a separate form, ordering them and connecting them, to the best of my skill, in such a way that, while they performed in part the functions of autobiographic story, they might be almost as comprehensible to the reader as to the persons to whom they had been addressed ; and might be appreciated alike for their literary charm and for the thoughts and feelings they enshrine. This I have striven to do with reserve, with indifference, with self-repression. If in the endeavour I have not been successful ; if my own feelings have obtruded themselves oftener than is becoming ; if personal predilection and the pleasure of living old bright days over again, have forced into undue prominence incidents or traits or passages in which the general reader may find, perhaps, but slight interest ; if I have been tempted to pay a passing tribute here and there to

some one dear enough to him and me, but whom the world will fail to recognize as more than a shadow or a name; I believe that no harsh judgment will be passed upon my errors. And yet there has been no circumstance described, however trifling in appearance, no individual indicated, however obscure, that did not in some tangible and distinct way bear a part in the formation of his character or of his tastes, in the awakening of his intellect or of his emotions, in the suggestion of trains of thought or dreams of imagination that find embodiment in his Poems, in his Essays, or in the Letters themselves.

“He was one of those to whom *in a short time it is given to live a long time* :” so said of him one of the most famous of living men. This, I believe, will be found to be true. His history presents no startling incidents ; but it is the history of a long life ; a life of the intellect and of the heart ; of intellectual enterprise and intellectual achievements ; of feelings various, deep, and true : and few dying at the age of three-and-twenty have left behind them so much work that has been the product of impulses so genuine ; of culture so lovingly pursued ; of purposes so generous, so honest, so clear of the taint of vanity ; of aspirations so transcendently pure.

In this book he will be found, as I have implied, chiefly his own unconscious biographer. If it

reveals him truly and indeed as he was, then the world will love him as his friends loved him, and will draw from his companionship here something of that joyous enthusiasm, that quickening of the imagination, that courage in the face of physical peril or intellectual difficulty, that keen enjoyment of the beauty and the majesty of the universe, that loving and humourous interest in the multiform life, individuality, and operance of men, which those who moved within the circle of his influence felt daily and hourly communicated to them by his brave, adventurous, manly, and versatile character.

I shall have no need then to dread the charge of partiality ; and a duty, the sweetest and the saddest, the most embarrassing and the most ennobling, that can ever be laid upon these hands to do, will have been not unfaithfully nor inadequately discharged.

G. F. ARMSTRONG.

*April 23, 1877.*



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# LIFE AND LETTERS OF EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

## CHAPTER I. 1841-1854, ÆT. 1-13.

**Birthplace.** — A Characteristic Anecdote. — Early-awakened Love of Nature. — The Wicklow Mountains. — Reminiscences of Early Childhood. — Implanting of Superstitious Fancies. — A New Acquaintance. — Musical Aptitudes. — First Religious Impressions. — Irvingism. — Religious Pantomimes. — Irvingites Denounced. — Early Schooldays. — Literary Aptitudes. — Old St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. A Dangerous Feat. — Theatricals. — The Isle of Man. — London and the Great Exhibition. — Rambles in London, and Impressions thence derived. — Military Aspirations. — Authority Defied. — In the Lock-up. — New Companions and Wild Amusements. — Musical Compositions. — Mountain Walks. — The Crimean War. — Suggestions for "Ovoca." — A Disappointed Ambition. — Poetry and the Mountains.

**T**HERE is a large red-brick mansion in Upper Merrion-Street, Dublin, once the town residence of Lord Mornington, and still sometimes known as "Mornington-House." It has been claimed as the birthplace of the Duke of Wellington. It is likewise honoured as the scene of the nativity

of the well-known chant which bears the name of "Mornington;" and the room—a large and handsome one—in which that pretty piece of music was composed used to be pointed out to me there when a child. It has since attained a less enviable distinction as the Office of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for Ireland; and is now—the Irish Church being sent adrift and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners being removed to (let us hope) a better place—the headquarters of the Commissioners of the Irish Church Temporalities. In this house Edmund John Armstrong first saw the light of day, on the 23rd of July, 1841. He had been preceded in his advent by an elder brother, about a year before; but that tender youngling, having for a few days gazed upon the world with eyes of wonder, and satisfied himself that it was no place for him, at the end of that period relinquished his earthly possessions; and, returning to the gloom and silence whence he had emerged, left behind him, as a legacy to his little brother to be, a mysterious and tender tradition; for which reason he finds mention here. But the boy born in the July of 1841 was in no mood to depart so soon. Strong, vigorous, healthy, he took the world with a "frolic welcome," and held on to it with a characteristic tenacity; a child noticeable and noticed, as he grew, for his large dark-blue eyes, his well-formed features, and his extreme vivacity, sensitiveness, and activity.



Of the many anecdotes of his early childhood which have been fondly repeated to me over and over again, there is one which has always had for myself a peculiar fascination. It relates how, in his third year, travelling with his parents in England, having been brought by them to a well-known cemetery in Liverpool, he was suddenly missed from the group of visitors, and for some time could not anywhere be found. At last, after anxious search, he was discovered all alone, kneeling before a tomb, spell-bound, awe-stricken, abstracted from all other perception, his little hands stretched out towards the white marble figure of an angel that stood with folded wings as guardian there.

In the same year his city-life was brought to an abrupt close—a consummation for which in after-days he was ever profoundly grateful; and he was carried out to reside in a house situated beyond what was then the utmost limit of the southern suburbs of Dublin. The suburbs of that city now extend two miles or more farther south. The struggles of the citizens to breathe free air have, in the course of a few years, transformed beautiful meadows and fine-land into ugly squares and red-brick terraces, have laid thick groves prostrate, and turned delightful field-paths into gruesome roads. But the home to which he then came looked out upon the greenest of fields, and an old historic wood of stately elms stood within a perch of its doors. Between it and the

Wicklow mountain-ranges there was but one house visible. The boy's eyes seldom rested upon *it*. That strange purple wall of hills stretching across the southern horizon, with the peak of the Great Sugar-Loaf lifted above their eastern slope (in colour and form the most beautiful peak in all the island); the green meadows rolling away to their feet; the distant woods; the clouds that rose up in vast throngs, and moved with shadow and sunshine over the green and purple landscape; these were his daily contemplation, and his imagination's food and wine. The mountains became his absorbing passion; they haunted him, they drew him towards them like beings whose will was not to be gainsaid. His entreaty ever was to be brought to their summits, to be allowed to wander over them, to see what lay beyond them; to learn whether what were indeed the tall dishevelled pines in their hollows were trees, or spectres, as he deemed them; whether what seemed like galaxies of stars were but the dancing rivulets and the rain-swept rocks glittering in the sunshine, as they were said to be.

In his later days he used to declare that his memory reached back to this very early period, and, among other proofs of this, he would describe vividly several events which happened some months at least before he reached his fourth birthday. One of these was a journey, in 1845, to a friend's country house in one of the western counties of Ireland.

He often spoke of a wild drive in rain, lightning, and thunder across the dark moorlands, in the course of that journey; of the ruined Castle of Boyle, in the county of Roscommon, which remained indelibly imprinted on his mind; but more especially—and, as he regarded it, of more intellectual importance—the attempts of his elder playmates in the old mansion at M——, at which he stopped, to startle and terrify him with tales of malignant spirits, and hideous representations of them, which often afterwards made darkness teem with apparitions for him; and to which he traced directly a belief in ghosts and hobgoblins, not shaken off without many persistent struggles of the will. In the pleasant evenings spent in this country-house, he used to be put up to tell stories after dinner; and, on one occasion, I am informed, scandalized his parents and astonished the other guests by clapping his hands in an ecstasy of applause, and crying “Bravo!” to the host, whom he addressed by his Christian name, when the latter had told a tale which particularly amused him.

In the course of this year, in his home near Dublin, a brother of tiny dimensions, dressed in flannel-shirt and much enveloped otherwise in blankets, was presented to his notice—an introduction which seems to have been welcome to him, and of which, also, he distinctly remembered, long, long afterwards, the circumstances and the

impression. This little brother looked up to him through life and worshipped him as a god.

The intense love of music—perhaps, as he himself considered it, his strongest natural taste—displayed itself in these summers; and it has been elsewhere related how he had learned to play upon a little flute with singular accuracy at a singularly early age. Another of his far-off recollections of which he used to speak was the imposing spectacle of the funeral of the Earl of Besborough (Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland), which he had witnessed in Dublin in his fifth year. This pageant he seemed to remember well; but he did not remember, what was nevertheless as remarkable as it is true, that, after his return home, that day, he stole out into the garden to enjoy the luxury of imitating all alone, as well as his childish skill and puny instrument would allow, the solemn cadences of the “Dead March” in *Saul*.

It had so befallen that the boy's father, in his early manhood, had been much attracted and impressed by the preaching of Edward Irving; and had conceived so great an admiration for that remarkable man that he had at last enrolled himself among his followers. In the bosom of this peculiar sect Armstrong was first indoctrinated with the general principles of the Christian faith. But he was destined to see and hear amongst them more than falls to the lot of most Christians. The extra-

ordinary rites and ceremonies of the sect first awed his young imagination, and then began irresistibly to tickle his strong inborn sense of humour ; and, as his younger playfellow grew from infancy to childhood, and beheld likewise—first with alarm, and then with amusement—the startling rites and still more startling “ manifestations ” which the new church boasted, he used, craving the latter’s assistance, to imitate behind-backs the sacred performances ; to gird himself, after the fashion of an archangel or evangelist, with night-shirt and bell-rope, rochets and crotchets, drapery and capery ; administer the Holy Communion with solemn pomp ; conduct priestly processions up and down the rooms ; offer up prayers, and deliver discourses ; and even (dread audacity !) parody that strange bounding, shivering movement and inarticulate agony of vocal mutterings, with which the prophets and prophetesses of the congregation exhibited the power and dignity of the Holy Ghost. These performances were conducted usually with a marked effort at gravity ; but sometimes the ludicrous side of the matter would turn inopportunately uppermost, and screams of laughter would interrupt, and perhaps terminate, the sacred play. Thus was laid in his mind, along with deep religious feelings, a lively appreciation, which he never lost, of the absurdity of religious eccentricities. But the extravagances of the little sect went too far, by and by, for his father’s sound

judgment to tolerate them any longer. That excellent man broke from the body, pursued by the anathemas of angels and archangels, evangelists, priests, prophets, dreamers, and interpreters of dreams; and the boy had freedom to laugh the crowd to scorn—if he willed it—to his heart's content. Yet, for the impressions they had left upon his young mind, he bore them ever afterwards a grudge; and, when a circumstance arose in later years to recall the early associations, he wrote of them to the partner of his childish parodies with a bitterness hardly relieved by the humour of the words. "I would very much like," he exclaims, "to trace the tangled web of the destinies of each Irvingite that contributed so largely to my early stock of ideas. (See Locke, Book I., *passim*.) I think it would make a splendid history. I always distrusted and felt repelled by them all; and I always believed the 'Priest of the Most High God' to be capable of any depth of depravity . . . Ugh! Abrenuntio Sathanas! Mark what particular care they took to save their souls! A singularly attractive history, pardie! . . . Unclean! Unclean! . . . Was it instinct that made me break off with the 'Priest of the Most High God?' Or pride? Or the feeling of cruelty which lies coiled like a snake in the hearts of the noblest? Or merely unconquerable disgust? Be this as it may, it is certainly some satisfaction to know that the lines of our lives, starting from a common centre, have

long since diverged more widely than the poles. And yet, O most ethereal of transcendentalists, thou art little better than a sham after all ! (This apostrophe is addressed, not to you, but to)—Your affectionate E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

Having been carefully instructed in the rudiments of Greek and Latin and Hebrew at home—the boy responding with an eager inquisitiveness to every attempt to supply him with knowledge—he was sent, about his seventh year, to a neighbouring day-school ; and, soon afterwards, was removed to a larger establishment in the city. Here he presently distinguished himself by his successes in class ; and by his adventurous spirit out of it. He was much attracted, at first, by lectures he received there in natural philosophy ; and he obtained the highest prize of the school for an essay (long preserved) in which he made mention, among other things, of the recent shock of an earthquake, which had alarmed the good citizens of Dublin ; and told how “ the jugs danced horn-pipes in the basins, and the tables stood upon their hind-legs in astonishment at the whirl.” The school was in some way connected with the Cathedrals of Dublin, and numbered several of the young choristers among its pupils. With some of these Armstrong’s love of music led him to fraternize ; and he now began to frequent the Cathedrals, with an eager longing to listen to the chants and

anthems and voluntaries, as each Sunday came round. These visits, again, led him to venture often from curiosity into the dismal dens which surround the Cathedral-Close of St. Patrick's; and he prosecuted his system of street-searching until, later on, I think, he knew well-nigh every street and alley in Dublin. From knowing the choristers, he got access to some of the sextons of St. Patrick's; and it was not long before a party, of which he was one of the most enthusiastic members, was formed with the object of exploring that Cathedral's loftiest and most secret recesses. At that time the old building was in a state of dangerous decay, and presented a very singular appearance. The nave was roofed with timber, and hideous rafters crossed it from wall to wall; and the inner wood-work was inhabited by pigeons, which fluttered about the Cathedral in tranquil domesticity. The organ divided the nave from the choir and the transepts; and the north transept was separated from the main building, and constituted a distinct church, with an entrance from the Close. The life inside the venerable pile on high-days and holy-days Armstrong has himself truthfully depicted in his poem of *Old St. Patrick's Cathedral*.<sup>1</sup> The structure was, as I have said, in decay throughout all its parts; but preëminently in its tower, belfry, and spire. The boys found their way

<sup>1</sup> See "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 415.—ED.



to the highest "friars'-walks"; and then ascended to the belfry. From this they climbed upwards in the interior of the tower, their party diminishing as they ascended; and at last the remnant perceived that in order to mount to the summit it would be necessary to clamber outside, stretching from one small spirelight to another. Armstrong, and one other, dared and accomplished this; and the recollection of the feat often, he used to say, mingled itself with his nightmares long subsequently. Little marvel! For when, years afterwards, from the street below he pointed out to his friends the spirelights, and the narrow ledge on which he had stood, high up in the black tower looming against the sky, their blood ran cold at the thought of it. Not very long after this exploration, a poor boy, searching for pigeons' nests, having climbed out from the "friars'-walks" of the old Church along one of the rafters of the nave, fell headlong through the air, and was dashed to atoms on the flags below; and as Armstrong stood on the spot where the shattered body had lain, and pictured the circumstances in his ever-vivid imagination, he felt a thrill of gratitude to the Powers that had preserved him in a more hazardous adventure, and reproached himself bitterly for his rashness.

About this time he began to display a very fervent love of theatricals, and, having fitted up a spare room at home as a little theatre, and provided

himself with some rude properties, used to invent, superintend, and take the leading parts in, petty impromptu plays and harlequinade, evening after evening, till the fancy exhausted itself.

The summer of 1851 was with him a period of new and rich experiences; for, after having spent some time in the Isle of Man, he was brought to London, to see the Great Exhibition and all the wonders of the metropolis which could afford delight to childish eyes. And I think he saw more of the stupendous city than comes under the notice of many children of his years. A kind-hearted old French refugee, living in the house of his uncle, used to lead him out daily for long walks through the interminable labyrinths of streets, and enjoyed a special pleasure in pointing out to him their curiosities and marvels. And all that he then beheld—the river with its throngs of ships, the bridges, the Thames Tunnel, the Polytechnic with its diving-bell, the Crystal Aisles with their inexhaustible treasures, the picture-galleries, the statues, the palaces, the Tower, St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey—resolved themselves into the semblance of a fairy vision, transforming in his memory from time to time like the shapes and colours in a kaleidoscope; and he babbled of London for years after as of the enchanted city of an *Arabian Nights'* tale. Another ramble among the beautiful scenes of the Isle of Man in 1853, including a memorable visit to Peel

Castle, further stimulated and enriched his imagination, and tended to make still more dear to him the romances and tales which he had already begun to read with avidity. A little portfolio of pencil-sketches which he brought back with him from this visit is now lying beside my hand.

Within half-an-hour's walk of his home in the county of Dublin were some extensive cavalry-barracks, and hither it was his habit to steal away whenever opportunity permitted, and spend hours in watching the drill and the occupations of the soldiers. The music of a military band, heard ever so far away, immediately roused him in pursuit; and he somewhat plumed himself on being able to detect the neighbourhood from which such distant sounds travelled, and on being able to come up with the troop, wherever it might be, marching to review or funeral. From the old celebrations of the Battle of Waterloo in the Phoenix Park he had seldom been absent since he had become an articulate being; and now, as he grew older, and freer to govern his own movements, almost every field-day saw him marching after the soldiers to the Fifteen Acres, three or four miles from home. Often, holding his little companion by the hand, he would find himself in the front of the flashing squadron or battery, as it advanced in headlong career, and with difficulty would escape from horses and wheels, dragging his mate with him across the field, with a

rare enjoyment of the danger incurred and of the dexterity of the escape. Observing the drill and the evolutions, he quickly picked up words of command and various movements, and he soon became the adored generalissimo of a well-trained army consisting of one tender volunteer. Nor was there any lack of goodnature and jovial welcome in the barrack-yards among the soldiers into whose midst he penetrated ; and a kind word of interest or bit of information from a burly sergeant or stalwart bombardier was looked upon as an honour not lightly to be esteemed. He was predisposed to look with loving eyes upon the profession of the soldier by tales often told at the home-hearth of soldier-kinsmen living or long dead ; and for several years he rejoiced in the belief that his also was to be a soldier's life, nor during that period did the wish seem to meet with direct disfavour in parental eyes. And yet, it must be said, that when this taste and set purpose were at their highest, he would turn from parades, field-days, Waterloo celebrations, without regret, whenever the alternative was offered him of a day upon the slopes of the Wicklow Hills.

About this time he suffered what appeared to him as severe a humiliation as could have befallen him ; for, having on a certain occasion, rightfully and manfully, resisted an interference with his liberty by an aggressive and brutal constable,

he was seized and dragged towards a Police-Office ; revolting against the ill-usage, he promised to follow the man if he would precede him ; and was thus led to the Station, brought before a blustering sergeant, interrogated, and, refusing to give his name, *locked up* ! After a considerable time he was released, and his name, being surrendered, was thereupon written down in the list of petty offenders. As he passed out, the ragged children congregated about the doors jeered at him. He had never felt so crestfallen and degraded. Ashamed to tell his disgrace, unwilling to wound his parents with the knowledge of it, he walked about for hours in sullen loneliness ; and was for a long time inconsolable ; nor in the ear of mortal save one youthful confidant did he breathe the galling secret till many years had passed.

A change again to another school—then a celebrated one in Dublin—introduced him to new companions ; and it must be confessed that he now became as wild as a young schoolboy could well be. Learning his ordinary lessons with ease, he was content with such school-successes as were to be won whenever the studious or ambitious mood might happen to visit him. A passionate desire for knowledge perpetually swayed him ; but it was now chiefly those books which happened to captivate his imagination that he read with attention ; and he was just one of those boys that puzzle

a school-master's brains to know what to do with being much too advanced for the classes adapted to their years, and yet not mechanical in the habits of study. Such boys are generally forced onward, to their own misfortune. He never came home without a prize from any school examination. His essays were always commended, and created surprise by their vigour, and depth, and humour. But just at this time he was, as I have said, a wild boy, who thought, perhaps, more of frolic and adventure, and of what he and his playfellows called *devilment* (a word more godless in sound than in signification), than of school-books and prizes. At this period his companions became numerous and various, and he was quite as much a favourite with his masters as with his schoolfellows. Some of the latter are now distinguished men; some, like himself, have passed away. The survivors well remember the boisterous pastimes of those days, the ringing of bells, and knocking at doors, and breaking of windows, and extinguishing of street-lamps, the robbing of orchards, the fights between rival schools, the explorations of the thieves' quarters of the town. And yet, at the same time, he was exercising his musical talents in composing chants and glorias, some of which were performed in a church, in the choir of which he now habitually sang with notable clear contralto! His frolic was

the overflow of joyous health and exuberant animal spirits ; and even his companions recognized in him a something which distinguished him from other boys. "He was, indeed," writes one of them, "one of my earliest friends, and one of the few men whom, among many acquaintances, I could look up to and *respect* . . . Dear Edmund was a great favourite with every one . . . If you knew how fondly I loved [him], and how proud I felt of every step he took, as reflecting some credit even on *me*, you would not be surprised at this expression of my feelings."

In the group of his companions were two—like most of the rest, some years older than himself—whose society had for him a peculiar charm. They had been born and brought up in their grandfather's house on the spurs of one of the Dublin Mountains, commanding a beautiful prospect of the wooded and well-cultivated Midland Plain, with the city-spires rising above the tree-tops, the wide bay of Dublin with its purple headland to the northward, and the blue, sail-dotted Channel stretching to the eastern horizon. The demesne, like many another in Ireland, had changed hands ; but the boys had still stories to tell of their childhood passed there, of the adventures of their elder brothers (doubtless exaggerated and coloured by imagination), of wild incidents of highway robberies, and other moving themes, associated with the neighbourhood and

transmitted from the "dark backward and abysm of time." Walter F\*\*\*\*, the elder of these two brothers, was a gentle, amiable lad, with a considerable fund of humour, and a great love for the alienated home on the mountain. Thither he sometimes acted as leader in delightful walks, and the old Park, and the wide fields on the slopes, and the rough mountain-top beyond, became very familiar ground. To Armstrong these rambles were beyond measure welcome, and they served just at that time to stimulate his love of nature which the rough schoolboy frolics might have tended in a measure, perhaps, to blunt and restrain. The walks which he took in company with his boy-friends, he would take over again, with various divergences, by himself; and while the others remained true to their common system of rough amusements, he was gradually, unperceived by himself or by them, developing widely different and antagonistic tastes and ideas. And just at this moment events occurred which accelerated that growth.

War was declared against Russia. To him, whose attachment to soldiers was so warm and personal, whose earliest and cherished ambition was so strongly bent towards a military life, whose imagination was so active and vivid, and whose sympathies were so painfully keen, this war—the first he had known—was a cause of the intensest



agitation. The departure of certain of the ill-fated regiments which took part in the campaign he has himself described in his poem *Ovoca*. Of several of the incidents there depicted he was an eye-witness. No regiment left Dublin for the seat of war without his walking side by side with it as far as he could go. Several squadrons of the Light Brigade, which took part in the charge of Bala-klava, went direct from Ireland. The 11th Hussars had been stationed in Dublin for a considerable time, and many of the men's faces and voices were as familiar to him as those of his own school-fellows. I remember well his look of pain as he grasped in his hand a little gift which one of the poor fellows had presented to a young lad as a keepsake the night before he left, to return never again. I remember the coldness creeping over my own body, and the feeling of utter bleakness and desolation, as we walked together through the empty barrack-squares the day after they had gone. I remember the bitter partings of those days, the wild cries, the long crowds accompanying the regiments, the faces of the brave fellows under their busbies and helmets, the shouts, the cheers

"In which the hearts of those that cried  
Sickened within them."

I remember it all, and the events which followed it. I was younger than he by several years, yet it

stirred me to the very bottom of my soul. It was like some strong fever with *him*, agitating the whole constitution, and, when it passes, leaving it permanently altered.

One of his elder schoolfellows, and his constant associate, young G. D. M\*\*\*\*, now a distinguished cavalry officer, was soon to take part in the grim work as it advanced. The two friends parted at a little watering place in the county Wicklow, where the families of both happened to be at the time residing. It seemed to him as if *he* was not the one destined for the profession which he so passionately adored. Those to whom he had looked for support in his ambition, had some time before earnestly exhorted him to turn his thoughts from it. The expected aid would never come. This parting made the truth dawn upon him more vividly than ever. He bowed to authority, and seemed somewhat sullenly to accept his fate. But he often afterwards complained of the bitter disappointment he had felt ; and would frequently insist that it would have been far better for him if the life of activity he had coveted had not been closed to him as it was. With M\*\*\*\*'s departure the little knot of friends was broken ; they were soon all separated in various ways ; and Armstrong now more and more isolated himself from other boys, and books and the hills became his dearest companions.

When his old playmates met him again, after two

or three years had passed, they agreed in one opinion, which they expressed pretty freely, that "Ned Armstrong was changed." No doubt they all were changed ; but perhaps in none of them was there so strange a metamorphosis apparent. His nature was not altered. It had only developed, amid circumstances and affinities of its own selection, into a nobler form. But he was changed indeed from what he had appeared to them to be. The strongest and best elements of his character had had time to expand. Rough jokes and rude youthful experiences, which used to form the staple of conversation, had now no interest for him ; nay, he somewhat peremptorily checked, at times, his old companions, and treated their ways with scorn—of which he had always abundance to display, when necessary, and a sufficiently scathing manner of expressing it. But he never lost that sense of fun, and that love of frolic which had found vent in ruder forms in those madcap days. The humorous side of things was seldom long in presenting itself to him ; and the most solemn occasion was prone to suggest a laugh. When he was sick and feeble in after years, this love of fun and keen sense of the ludicrous were often, too apparently, a source of danger to him ; and the difficulty which he experienced in reducing his animal spirits to a condition of safe tranquillity was very great. Those who watched him in his fatal illness know well how

in his severest sufferings he found food for merriment; and even on his death-bed how light of heart he was, to the latest hour. But it was little wonder that the friends failed to recognize the most reckless of their group in the boy-poet who greeted them on their reunion.

CHAPTER II. 1854-1858, ÆT. 13-17.

Establishment of a Life-long Friendship : G. B.—New and lofty Ambitions.—Another fortunate Change of Residence.—Passion for Nature intensified.—Early Story-Writing.—Poetry of Scott : Reasons of its Attractiveness.—Early Poems. — Humourous Propensities. — An unexpected Celebrity.—Shakespeare-Studies.—The Poetry of Coleridge.—Poetical Revels among the Mountains : Killakee, Glendhu.—Wordsworth opened.—Byron : first Perusal of “The Giaour.”—Tennyson : a pleasant Awakening.—Goethe : Adoration of “Faust.”—Attitude towards School-fellows.—Consequences of Miscellaneous and Irregular Reading.—Career chosen.—Another Change of School.—Tribute to the Rev. R\*\*\*\* N\*\*\*\*.—Hard Studies commenced.—Youthful Vigour and Enthusiasm.—First Love.—A Memorable Day.

JUST about the time that his old companions were separated from one another and from him, Armstrong had been consolidating a new and particularly congenial friendship, which lasted until the close of his life. It was natural that when he found a boy of his own age, a young artist, with intellectual gifts in abundance, and a love of mountain-rambles that never flagged, and a true artist's eye for the scenes which he loved, he should draw him close to him, and make him his almost daily companion ;

and that, as the years advanced, pleasant recollections and associations, ever multiplying, should bind him still more firmly to that friend, and encourage him to confide to him his cares and dreams ; and that, even if their paths should for a time be sundered, and their characters and ambitions should assume different forms, his steadfastness and fidelity should keep the link that bound them still firm to the end. Never was friendship reciprocated with an affection more tender or devoted than by his well-beloved G. B. Very delightful was this high-souled companionship in those days. This friend and one other became for a time his only associates ; but this friend principally his confidant now. Later, one more was joined to the band, but was hardly admitted, I think, within the inmost sanctuary. Those were days of almost unclouded joy—"days of rapture," as he writes of them, "which will never, never more return."

Another fortunate change of residence, to a house a mile or two farther out in the country—a flight from the fast-encroaching suburbs, undertaken at his own earnest entreaty—brought him within an easier walk of the mountains ; and his rambles among the heathery wildernesses now became incessant. His letters, like his poems, will be found full of references to this period ; to it he attributed, and rightly, the largest share in the formation of his character and his tastes, and his whole after-life

was coloured and made beautiful by the suggestions and experiences which now flowed in upon him.

Surprise has been expressed at the attraction which Wordsworth's poetry had for him, and it has been characterized with some accuracy as an attraction of contrast ;<sup>1</sup> but those most familiar with the facts of his earlier life would scarcely regard it as strange ; for there were two elements in Wordsworth's poetry which were sure to strike him at once, and draw him into close sympathy with that great poet's character and moods ; one, the deep tenderness which appears in such poems as *Michael*, *The Brothers*, *The Last of the Flock*, the First Book of *The Excursion* ; the other, the intense all-pervading love of nature. He has in his essays vindicated Wordsworth and condemned Shelley ;<sup>2</sup> but several of his essays, it should be observed, were written to express his own changes of feeling and revulsions, and contain often rather the indirect utterances of remorse than the evenly-balanced opinions which in reality he entertained. No one could have been more alive to the ludicrous features of Wordsworth's poems (the result of Wordsworth's own deficiency in the sense of the ludicrous) ; and no one could have turned Wordsworth into

<sup>1</sup> See a friendly and cleverly-written article in *The Contemporary Review* of February, 1867.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> See "Essays and Sketches of Edmund J. Armstrong."—ED.

ridicule with greater gusto than he did at one epoch of his life—as a pencil-marked copy of the poems (to which he alludes in one of his letters) too abundantly attests. For this he was afterwards ashamed of himself, as he was for his once love-blinded veneration of Shelley; but the defence he has written of the former left with his friends an impression of a more unqualified admiration than he felt, as his condemnation of the latter seemed to imply abhorrence of a poet whom he still dearly though less devotedly adored. The “tall rock” had haunted him too “like a passion;” and he had known well such figures as Michael, and the Boy that “hooted to the owls,” and Margaret, and the Leech-Gatherer; and rustic philosophers, if not so profound as the Pedlar, yet uttering a wisdom which made the Pedlar’s diatribes appear not so improbable after all. This was the secret of the attraction which Wordsworth’s poetry had for him, when he found it.

But the sober-suited philosophic pleasure which nature communicated to Wordsworth was not quite akin to the intoxicating draughts which she was wont at this time to administer to him in the Wicklow Mountains and by the shores of the Irish Sea. A keen delight in climbing the highest ranges, in scaling the most dangerous precipices, in leaping the most forbidding chasms, and in marching with wild songs and exuberant mirth over the moors,



and along the stormy mountain-roads, careless whither so that it was up and on—this was the manner of his pleasure now : not unvaried by moods of quiet contemplation ; long hours spent upon sweet-smelling heathery summits, gazing at the fleeting cloud-shadows in the valleys, and the lines of blue and silver, and spots of light and gloom, on the far-off sea ; or merry chats of a rainy day in the cottages with the country-folk, some of whom became quite intimate friends ; or the reading of some pleasant tome under the screen of the dancing oak-leaves in the deep rocky glens, where the brown streams leap and bound and dash themselves into a hundred tiny cataracts in the cool clefts below ; or even in casting a bait now and then for a trout or a perch—but of this pursuit he was no passionate lover ; and I have seen him with a book on his knee, by the waterside, absorbed in the tale he was reading, while his line was caught in a tree above him, and a fish was dangling unnoticed on the hook ;—or in capping stories with a companion ; or building up delightful visions of adventure in other lands, to be enjoyed in the years to come, lying on the pebbles by the white breakers of the sea, in some secluded cove of a scarped and storm-split headland.

The mountains suggested stories which he had begun very early to write out for his companions' amusement and his own ; and now it was that poetry became with him a passion and a language. Having won

a school-prize, about this time, for proficiency in Hebrew Grammar, he had selected as his prize book a goodly edition of the poems of Scott, whose novels had long been a source of unspeakable enjoyment to him; and the splendid metrical romances, redolent of the heather and the mountain-breeze, now stirred him as no book had ever before done. His letters show that the thought of his own descent from a wild clan the deeds of whose chiefs Scott so delighted to recall, tended to render his imaginative sympathy with the poet and his themes still more intimate and personal. But it was the life he had so long led among the brown mountains of Wicklow that had prepared

<sup>1</sup> His father would often tell him how, in his boyhood, when a guest of his near kinswoman, a Mrs. Lockhart, at Edinburgh in 1821 or 1822, he had slept over the chamber usually occupied by Sir Walter, but his young eyes had never been gladdened by the sight of the Great Unknown—always coupling the story with another, about Sheridan Knowles which will bear repeating. Crossing to Glasgow, on his way to Edinburgh, he had had as fellow-passengers in the cabin with him Sheridan Knowles and a famous preacher popularly known by the name of “Brimstone Jones,” or some other soubriquet of equally pungent savour. The sea was very rough, and the two distinguished gentlemen were in consequence violently sick, while, during the intervals of the agonies, they interchanged remarks of a religious nature, with as much display of unction as was possible under the circumstances. At length, at some startling conjuncture, the young passenger, quite involuntarily, burst into a loud laugh. As soon as Knowles had recovered from his deadly spasm, he turned

him to welcome thus, long before Wordsworth's, the poetry of Scott ; to understand its imagery ; to enjoy the healthy manly spirit of it. For months he literally revelled in it. From it his earlier poems took their complexion and form.

But even in those days his own independence of thought and style asserted themselves unbidden. Of his earlier poems, however, I speak from recollection only ; for all the verses he wrote at this period were consigned to the flames, along with a great many others by a friend of his, with mutual consent of the authors and simultaneous spleen, in the winter of 1861,—a copy of a very sacred book, I regret to say, (from a somewhat similar energetic impulse) very nearly sharing their fate at the same time. *It* only got as far as the hob, thus affording time for remorse to recover it ; but the verses reached the flames, and were consumed. Some of his pieces thus ruthlessly destroyed I have tried to remember, and have been able to recon-

struct the youth with darkened brows, and in melancholy melodramatic cadences rebuked him : “ Young sir, young sir,” he cried, “ never laugh at the misfortunes of others, for you know not how soon

Misfortune *thus* may overtake yourself ”—

which, to the lasting moral benefit of the young transgressor, it presently did.—Poor Sheridan Knowles ! Not long since there was a revival of his plays at the Haymarket. His finest style seemed not unlike Shakespeare's—in the exploits of Ancient Pistol.—ED.

struct one or two, which appear in his collected Poetical Works. But I have never ceased to chide the copartner in that act of heathenish infanticide. For some of those boyish poems were very delightful in their freshness and wild rhythmic cadences. To me at least, and to one or two others, they seemed marvellous creations, and made us feel perfectly satisfied that their writer was a true and original poet, and that some day the world would acknowledge him as such.

Comic verses alternated with serious tales and apostrophes to the beloved hills; and often from the most solemn beginnings he would pass, when a sudden freak would seize him, into the wildest mockery—as for example in such a lyric as this, which has come jingling back to me, as I ponder on those far days :—

### “BELLS AND TRUMPETS.

#### “ BELLS.

“ We tinkle for dinner, and—O careless sinner,  
We clatter to call you to Church !  
O, never neglect us, or you ’ll recollect us  
Some day when you ’re left in the lurch !

#### “ TRUMPETS.

“ We bray for the battle, and ’mid the last rattle  
We ’ll conquer the din of the bell—  
Take care, my good fellow, while thus we rebellow,  
That you ’re not sent posthaste to Hell ! ”

Again, reflections upon a day's glorious ramble among the mountains were the basis, once, of a theological discussion conducted in the dark between him and a younger companion, lying restless after their long walk ; at the conclusion of which it was suggested that each disputant should compose forthwith a psalm of devout thanksgiving. After a pause, it was agreed to report progress ; and (the ludicrous aspect of the business having evidently got the better of him in the interval) Armstrong somewhat maliciously insisted that the junior should recite his composition first. Taken unprepared, the latter, with much solemnity, began somewhat thus :—

“Give thanks, give thanks for hill and vale,  
Kippure's stern crag, and Dodder's dale,  
Where meet the brooks of Cot and Slade—  
Both of which the Lord hath made !”

A loud burst of laughter greeted the puritanical whine. “Good, good,” cried Armstrong : “go on, go on—here you are :—

“Praise-God Barebones, Leathern-coat Jack,  
Rotten-slipper Jekur, and Old-Clo' Mack,  
Mellakin-Noles, and Lanty-from-Kent—  
These were the members of the Rump Parliament !

“A cranky barrel-organ on the Platform stood,  
Compared with the former one it was n't much good ;  
By Lanty-from-Kent the music was *ground* ;  
You'd think it was a coffee-mill, to judge by the sound !” . .

And the rest of the night was spent in the com-

position of stanza after stanza of the same ludicrous doggerel, descriptive of an imaginary *Rump*, in which the celebrities of the Civil Wars figured side by side with creatures of the moment's invention rejoicing in an incongruous combination of nicknames; and the next day was devoted to an elaboration of the night's production, with which was interwoven, in much Homeric phraseology, a description of a scuffle in the House between the rival parties, terminating with a dissolution of the *Rump* by Oliver—

“O, it was tremendous to see them all pell-mell,  
When who do you think walks in but Oliver Cromwell?  
He spoke, and signified to Lanty-from-Kent  
That he would dissolve the Rump Parliament !”<sup>1</sup>

This epic, which was carefully copied out, and cleverly illustrated with pen-and-ink sketches of the imaginary characters and incidents, was destined to enjoy an unexpected duration of vitality; for it got out among some public schools; and eight or nine years afterwards, to the surprise and amusement of its originator, was recited to him by some younger friends in a distant part of the Island, as something wholly new to his ears. So rapid were

<sup>1</sup> If the reader should wish for more, here is another stave—

“Mullakin-Noles was a plump parish-priest;  
He came from the lovely County Meath (East);  
He was a father of great renown—  
He kept a can of whiskey under his gown !”—ED.

the transitions of his feelings all his life through ; so irresistible his sense of absurdity ; and so prompt and lively his invention.

At the same time he was writing a really excellent narrative poem, cast in a serious mould, on the subject of the Battle of Clontarf ; closely modelling it—so far as it went—on the *Iliad*, and filling it with pictures of dignified heroic action.

At this period the plays of Shakespeare were read with eagerness and exultancy, night after night, sitting in his little study, with the one companion from whom he was never separated for more than six months of his life. Late into the nights, and then again early in the mornings before it was time to set out upon the three miles' walk into the town to school, these readings continued, till, I think, almost every play and poem had been perused, not critically—Heaven forbid !—but with intense un-failing enjoyment. The special favourites were, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Measure for Measure*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the two parts of *Henry IV.*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ; the names and the speeches of their characters were continually on his lips, and he was soon fortunate enough to see some of them acted sufficiently well to render them yet more adorable.

In what surroundings he first read Coleridge, and how the poetry of that wonderful mind enthralled

him, he has himself described in words quoted in part elsewhere, and which may here find fitting place in their entirety :—"A golden day it was," he says (looking back from the autumn of 1864), "when first the poetry of Coleridge, a splendid orb rising through mists and banks of cloud, dawned upon our young hearts,—friend of my boyhood, companion of my boyish excursions among the hills boyish still whenever we talk of those old days—generous, mild-minded, pensive G. B. ! We took the uncut volume to the mossy summer-house in the mountains, sacred to poetic readings, deep in the heart of the murmuring pine-grove, the little rivulet babbling and laughing past us through the chequered shade ;<sup>1</sup> and there, all alone, undisturbed by fear of interruption, we read, each in his turn, poem after poem, till the summer evening darkened about us, and, disquieted by a sub-conscious anticipation of a merited scolding, we hurried home, sweeping the dew from heath and fern with our flying footsteps. Those were days when we were wont to dazzle our aunts and school-companions with ejaculatory lines from *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* and *Genevieve*, in sublime unconsciousness of pedantry. Days when we experienced a rapture and a glow if peradventure we should sit at table with one who had been at Chamouni, and looked with bodily eyes upon the Arve and the Arveiron.

<sup>1</sup> A dell in the beautiful demesne of Killakee.—ED.



and the gentiana's 'flowers of loveliest blue.' Days when we revelled in calculations of a romantic arithmetic; and plotted impossible excursions to the Lakes; and indited 'watery discourses'<sup>1</sup> in wavering verse concerning the bleak tarns of our own weird moorlands. Days of foolery and frolic and delightful dreams, which will never, never more return! But the poetry of Coleridge, once deeply loved, is indeed 'a joy for ever.' Since then we have been successively enamoured of many muses; we have passed through Byronism; Wertherism, Tennysonianism, as if by a doom not to be averted (so must children matriculate in whooping-cough and graduate in measles); and yet is our passion for the Melpomene of Coleridge, if less fervid and vehement than of yore, every whit as true, and as deep as ever. The Ancient Mariner still holds us with his glittering eye; the wild music of *Christabel* still agitates us in fitful gusts with a troublous joy. The sublime thunder-psalm that greeted the sunrise on the rosy summits of Mont Blanc still hushes the tumults of our souls to silent awe, and quickens within us thoughts too deep for words. Yes, though in sooth our love for poetry and nature is no longer the fiery passion of youth towards a mistress, but rather the soul-deep affection for a mother—*μουσομήτορ' ἐργάνη*—yet the charm still winds itself around us, and

<sup>1</sup> Izaak Walton.—E. J. A.

we are swayed by its mystic power. So will it ever be with those who have drunk deeply of the sweet waters of this genuine fount of Helicon. And once when thou wert languishing on a bed of wearisome pain, and didst ask of me a snatch of the well-beloved song, did I intone in dithyrambic frenzy the Rime of the crazy Mariner, with all the accompaniments of flashing eyes and passionate cadence, histrionic emphasis and gesture, till thou wert soothed—and (could it be the pathetic minors of my voice?) wert lulled in peaceful slumber ! . . .”

And there was another spot where Coleridge's poems were read aloud again and again—a huge mass of granite rock, fallen half-way down the mountain-side overhanging the wild valley of Glendhu, where the fir-trees cluster their green tops, and the heather in early autumn is one vast bed of purple blossoms. There would he delight to read, reclining, with the rock for a couch, and the brackens and bilberry-bushes for cushions to lean and to right,—in a perfect seclusion, with no sound but the sighing of the breeze in the neighbouring pine-wood, and the chit-chat's merry mountain-note and the clear treble of the rivulet below in the valley. The wild hawks would hover overhead, and the rabbits come out one after another, and descend to the green sward by the brook to feed ; but rarely human foot passed that way, except late in the evening, when the vale-folk were returning from

their turf-cutting high up among the moorlands, or a lonely itinerant would toil wearily up the steep road on some unknown journey. One of his earliest poems was an address to this very glen, which was indeed long one of his favourite haunts.

From Coleridge to Wordsworth was a natural step, and a copy of Wordsworth was, in time, dog's-eared, thumbed, and bereft of its back ; but Wordsworth, as I have here hinted, did not awaken in him all at once the same degree of enthusiastic rapture. And little wonder, for Byron was added just then to his own particular bookshelf ; and the Greek tales were attractive to one who had received so strong an impulse from Scott, and in whom imagination and physical activity had not yielded place to meditation and analysis ; and the *Giaour* was read for the first time on the broad top of the highest mountain of the range above Glendhu—Cruagh—he and his companion lying in the dense heather, which was all pink and redolent of honey and buzzed about by bees, while the grouse chuck-chucked around them as they rose from their covers. And the sun indeed went down that glorious evening behind the western hills while the last lines were still unread ; and the stars were thick and bright in the autumn heavens before the young enthusiasts reached their home.

Not very long afterwards he awoke one morning at the sound of a familiar voice, reading beside him one of the most beautiful of Mr. Tennyson's earlier

poems. The exquisite melody of the verse captivated him at once ; he was up in a trice, and was no sooner dressed than he had secured the volume, and was absorbed in its pages. One of the poems which most strongly affected his imagination that day was *Ænone*. *In Memoriam* and *Maud* he afterwards regarded as the greatest of the Laureate's works ; and some criticism on the former will be found in his essay on Shelley. A very little later he opened for the first time the *Faust* of Goethe, and thenceforward never a year passed without his having read and re-read that inexhaustible poem with increasing wonder and love.

These readings of poetry, and his confirmed habit of verse-writing, and the nightly and daily conversations on themes of romance, and the long mountain-rambles, combined to abstract him from the ordinary pursuits of schoolboy life, to make indeed the society of his schoolfellows on the whole distasteful to him, and to produce for a time a certain air of indifference which could hardly have failed to make itself felt. Only when some bit of athletic daring was broached among them was he tempted from his reserve ; and I remember at this time his clearing at a bound the platform of the school assembly-room, at which every one else in the school except one of the masters and himself "balked" ignominiously ; and, again, his having been one of three or four adventurous youths who had to pay

damages for having broken through the ceiling of a school-room in their efforts to climb over the roof. Sometimes, but not often, he would ask a class-fellow to join him in a long walk among the hills ; and on one occasion, when some five or six were to have gone with him on a ramble of unusual length, I remember his spending a good many hours in composing and storing up in his memory a series of tales about the scenes through which he intended to lead them. At this school he was for some considerable time under a master—Mr. J. V\*\*\*\*\*, for whom he always preserved a deep respect and affection, and who showed him many special marks of admiration and regard. This friend went afterwards into foreign military service, and died on an alien shore.

But the serious business of his life was now soon to begin. Certain circumstances of his childhood, into which I need not enter, had tended to encourage the belief that in his future he would not have to depend much upon his own exertions for the means of life. His early ambition to be a soldier was fostered by this belief, and when that ambition had been discouraged by the relatives who had most power to further it, and when by-and-by his bent lay in quite another direction, the impression still remained. Now, however, that dream was to be broken ; and he discovered with a painful suddenness that his future would be, in all proba-

bility, one of enforced work ; and the choice of a profession being placed before him, he chose, as the one most consonant with his aspirations, a career of learning and intellectual toil. The school where he received his instruction, which, when he entered it, was the best and most famous in Dublin, was now fast falling into decrepitude. He felt that if he was to succeed in his studies, it would be necessary to get away from old surroundings, and into a school under fresher and more vigorous management. Such an one presented itself much nearer home, and its proximity was likewise regarded as a recommendation. And so he turned his back on the old associates, many of whom, strange to say, he did not meet again for several years ; and entered the new school with satisfaction. There he was soon put upon surer paths, and led forward with more sympathetic care ; and if these pages should ever happen to fall into the hands of his old principal, the Rev. R\*\*\*\* N\*\*\*\*, now in a very distant land, let him be assured that his goodnatured helpfulness was to him always in after-life a happy recollection, as it is now to me.

In this school, being in its highest class, he enjoyed the most perfect freedom of action, and received plenty of encouragement in his aims. He set himself to work with a characteristic indomitable determination, and with a full use of his enviable faculty of concentrativeness, which made it possible

for him for the time being to exclude even the most fascinating matters of thought from his mind, and thus to economize his moments, as if by a natural law, with rare advantage.

Thus he opened a fresh chapter of his life—a varied one, to be arrested, God knows, darkly and tragically enough.

The more he advanced in this rapid course of study, the more he felt that, for the purposes of mere collegiate success, his previous education had been deplorably bad. With a fervent love of the Greek and Latin poets, he had read through them unsystematically, and had gone much farther than had been required of him, looking for the pleasure they yielded his imagination, not cultivating accuracy. More than this, he had despised—and he continued to despise to the last day of his life—the grubbing student who confines himself merely to the tasks set down for him, dreams of nothing higher than his pitiable little prizes, and never cares to think or to explore ahead. He had therefore to pick up all his lost threads, and he had to be quick about it. It will soon appear to what a career of intellectual endeavour he committed himself.

I have followed the course of his life to the conclusion of one of its brightest and happiest periods. As yet he had suffered little. His spirit was strong and eager for adventure. His bodily health was perfect; no lad of his age could have been more

vigorous, more lively, harder to fatigue or exhaust. His activity of mind and of body was incessant; books were read; poems were written; mountains were scaled; joyous walks of exploration were taken day after day, enlivened by choruses, sometimes of his own creation—his several companions being schooled by him in their respective parts, which he would strike out impromptu, guided by an ear intolerant of discord. Behind his father's house the green fields stretched for miles and miles into the apparently interminable Midland Plain; and one of his delights was, to go out with a leaping-pole, and pass away far, through field after field, startling the shy blue kingfisher and the water-hen in their haunts, as he went bounding across the streams and ditches and the "green mantle of the standing pool." And another of his fancies was, to start from the mountains, wherever on their sides or summits he might happen to be, and make his way in a straight line home, crossing fences, garden-walls, rivulets, passing through demesnes, farmyards, woods, turning seldom aside for any obstacle, till his destination was reached. So he lived; and each day's activity seemed to be followed only by an accession of intenser vitality and a more rapturous enjoyment of life.

It was now that the first beautiful passion of boyhood began to find utterance in his verse; and if a boy's dream of love had ever power to exalt the



nature in which it awoke, this, his young vision, exalted him. I was a very little boy when we walked out one lovely summer-day, he and I, far from our home to one of the most beautiful of the Wicklow gorges—then more beautiful than it is now, for it was unspoilt by any touch of desecrating hands, and nature had her own wild way with it ; and while I rested by a brook in a neighbouring valley, he wandered alone in that delicious glen ; and I well remember the light on his face and the rapture in his eyes when he returned to me, and told me that he had there seen unexpectedly, among the old oaks and hazels, such a face as he had longed to see. The world seemed for him new-clad in richer summer ; and the music of his voice and the glory on his face made the world appear to me that moment a paradise indeed.

I look back upon that day as the one of most unbroken joy I ever knew in his life ; and it does appear as if a shadow began to darken about him soon afterwards ; and although there were many and many happy days to follow, and with them successes, and fine experiences, and progress in knowledge, and bright achievements, still it seems to me as if the same lightness of heart and the same perfect freedom from care never again returned.

## CHAPTER III. 1858-1859, ÆT. 17-18.

A Romantic Acquaintanceship.—A Gloomy Walk and Eventful Discussion.—Early Scepticism.—Mental Turmoil.—A Triple Alliance.—Eager Search for Light, and Boyish Extravagances.—“The Valley of the Shadow of Death.”—Downward Strides.—Revolt against a Religion of Blood.—Bugbear of the Vindictive Deity.—The Vindictive Deity defied.—Youthful Love-Dream shattered.—Mental Agonies.—Loyalty to Virtue.—A Theological Challenge.—“The Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.”—Fantastic Religionists.—An Eloquent Evangelist: unstable Arguments in Support of Christianity.—A deeper Darkness.—Notion of a Personal God abandoned.—Undeveloped Materialism.—The Seaside.—Continued Intellectual Activity.—“The Doctor,” T. C. D.—Manicheistic Approximations.—Cynical Indifference.—The Verge of the Bottomless Pit.—Lament for the Lost Love.—First Visit to Derbyshire.—Wales described.—Brightening Horizons.—Enters Trinity College, Dublin.—University Successes.—Letter I.: *the Scottish Borderers*.

FROM the time when first his tastes began to develop in the direction of poetry and intellectual endeavour, Armstrong had never found it easy to meet with congenial associates, and outside the circle of his household he had now but one really intimate companion. And yet nobody was

less of the recluse by nature. He longed for friends who could understand him, and whom he could understand ; and, above all, for free, confiding, unreserved *brotherhood* ; for nothing short of this ever satisfied him, and half-hearted friendships were intolerable to him.

It was just about this time, when he had launched himself upon his new career of hard systematic study, with a definite object and a strong sense of the necessity for unabating exertion, that the wish was awakened in him to make the acquaintance of a schoolfellow of his friend B., whose praises the latter had so frequently sung to him that he began to believe the much longed-for perfection was not so far off after all. After, I believe, an interchange of literary productions, through the good offices of the faithful intercessor, B.—who, I have no doubt, left no laudatory word in his friend Armstrong's favour unspoken—and after, perhaps, some slight coquettish delays on either side, by chance or design a very welcome meeting took place in the early summer of 1858 ; and the day was spent among the hills. Armstrong found then a student, a little older than himself, whose reading had run to some extent in his own grooves, and whose ambition appeared to him as lofty as his own. And that the conversation which they held together was fruitful of intellectual results to him he ever afterwards recognized, as he dwells on the recollection

of their walk along the mountain-side, in prose and in verse—

“Rememberest thou? Our hearts beat high  
With aspirations after fame,  
With longings for a glorious name,  
And sighs for immortality.

And one would mould in epic bold  
The struggle of the Greek for rights;  
And one<sup>1</sup> would wreath the hill and wold  
With songs like chaplets; one with flights

Above the Aonian Mount would soar,  
And sing of Life and Death . . .

\* \* \* \*

Then o'er the hills we bounded swift,  
By gushing brook and craggy rift,  
To happy homes, with quickened pace,  
To nurse an amaranthine youth,  
To smoothe away the wrinkled brow,  
To strive with every nerve for truth  
And knowledge. O, rememberest thou?”

And again, in a letter from Jersey, in February, 1861, “I can never,” he writes, “remember without a sigh the day on which for the first time we met,—the unclouded sky, the purple mountains, the sparkling city, and the vast and boundless main. That day was worthy a white mark; it was one of the brightest that I ever passed.” A little spark would kindle in him a great fire; and the words spoken that day had more meaning for him than either of his companions was aware.

<sup>1</sup> Himself.—ED.

Weeks went over, and the new acquaintances met again, but under changed skies, and in a district which, at least to one of them, was never suggestive of anything but gloom. Westward of the village of Roundtown—the extreme south-western outpost village of Dublin—a road runs away towards the lower spurs of the mountains, passing through a dreary limestone plain, scooped here and there into ghastly green quarry-holes, each like the pit of Acheron, suggestive of sudden precipitations from the unstable earth-cliffs over them, and sudden cramps and suckings-down of unwary bathers at their edges ; with narrow neglected fields of dock and rag-wort, pounded in between black stone walls, and browsed by broken-down horses, and cows that seem long past their milk. Out of this plain, as if with a sad effort to relieve its dismal monotony, rises a series of wart-like mounds, on the summit of one of which stands the bald shell of an ancient castle, attributed (most erroneously) by the melancholy fancy of the neighbourhood to some Danish architect of the dark ages of Irish history ; with a hole in its side, by the same gloomy imagination attributed—with an anathema—to the cannon of Cromwell ; and haunted, it is believed, not without some colour of probability, by the Devil and all his angels for the last two hundred years. The friends found themselves wandering out in this region, one sullen and depressing day, when the rain, long threatening, came on more heavily

than they had anticipated ; and, climbing up the little mound to the castle, they placed themselves under its draughty vaults for shelter.

There their conversation settled down upon those questions which have to be faced at some moment by every reflecting honest man ; which have disturbed the world from the beginning of time, and will probably trouble it to the end. God, death, and the after-death ; the seeming justice or injustice of the laws which govern the affairs of men ; the conflict of the creeds ; the consistency or inconsistency of current theological doctrines with one another, with morality and moral laws (if there be such), with scientific facts, with common sense ; of these they were led on to dispute, and the speculation became more and more fascinating—

“ Then we discoursed of life and death,  
 Religion—lo ! a sudden light  
 Flashed on us, changing dark to bright,  
 Around, within, above, beneath ;  
 And we were fevered with delight ;  
 The blue veins swelled upon my brow ;  
 Strange visions crowded on my sight ;  
 Thou too wert wild—thou, even thou ! ”

And I have no doubt that many of the conjectures thus hazarded took “ a sombre colouring ” from the features of the landscape around the questioners, and its dreary suggestiveness ; and that many a question received a negative answer prompted by

the momentary gloom which oppressed them ; for nature herself starts our misgivings of her own harmonies, as surely as she awakens our loves and adoration ; and is herself responsible for the difficulty we experience, at times, in satisfying ourselves of a benevolent purpose in her existence.

The acquaintances parted, and did not meet again till several eventful years had passed. But, having fairly entered that valley of the shadow of death, Armstrong was not the one to turn back from cowardice, or indifference, or stupidity. He would go straight onward, undeterred by the pain ; and to him the pain was, for a time, perhaps unusually severe.

He had been educated from earliest childhood in the doctrines of Christianity by one who lived up to his religious convictions perfectly, if ever yet man did ; one whose sensitiveness and tenderness were so great as to act as an obstruction in the path of worldly success ; one whom he loved dearly. The avowal of his unbelief would be a hurtful revelation to that noble soul. This was one considerable element in the suffering which he was now to taste, as he became convinced that he could no longer retain the faith of his childhood. Another source of acute agony was the actual severance of the old dreams and beliefs themselves from his mind ; for, as a child, he had found in them, from time to time, a very real consolation.

Another disturbing element was the thought that he was setting himself against the judgment of wise and good men who had upheld the creed, toiled for it, and died for it; and perhaps entering into absolute antagonism with the very Deity Himself, in whom he had once trusted. During the first months of this active scepticism his mind was in a state of racking turmoil; and, amid all his eager and persistent studies (now conducted with still greater ardour and care), he returned to the questions which harassed him again and again; read one book after another from which he hoped to derive assistance; and renewed his discussions with his two boy-friends on almost every occasion on which he conversed with them. The result was that a little knot of three youths, of whom he was always the dominant figure, became a peripatetic society, first of doubters, then of deists, then of iconoclasts vowing hostility to all religious forms, and then of atheists outright—presumptuous children, no doubt; and yet I am not prepared to acknowledge that the mind is, on the whole, much sharper, or the feelings more genuine, more generous, or more pure in ordinary men of forty or fifty than in such boys in their teens.

As the members of this small band were descending down the slope to atheism, they endured—each according to the measure of his emotional capacity and the activity of his brain—unwonted agonies. The problems which had come before them,



peremptorily demanding solution, haunted them night and day. Their dearest pursuits were forgotten in order that the intellectual struggle might be valiantly maintained. Every experiment which fancy or reason could suggest as likely to dispel the darkness or lift the impenetrable veil, was tried and found wanting. Antic rites and gloomy ceremonies were celebrated, as if in rivalry of the recognized creeds of men. The Devil was challenged to appear, in darkened chambers, and at midnight, but in vain. Graveyards and their dark vaults were visited and brooded in, in the hope of bringing about that state of physical and mental exaltation or depression which has been supposed to render possible an intercourse with a world of spirits, that through such, peradventure, the secrets of fate might be revealed. A skull and cross-bones, dug up, with a quantity of other human wreck, in a field behind his father's house—and suggesting for the moment the idea of foul murder done in days forgotten, but turning out to have been buried there by some capricious collector of curiosities—were hung up by Armstrong in his bedroom, to quicken the imagination and intensify the perceptions. Much unpleasant imagery was collected and laid by, to vex the mind at inconvenient moments, no doubt, often enough thereafter. It was solemnly agreed between two of the number that whichever should die first should visit the survivor, and communi-

cate what truths he might make known. And—I trust the pious reader will not start on hearing it—the Supreme Will Itself was besought to manifest Itself by certain specified signs, that the doubts which oppressed the minds of the unbelievers might be for ever cleared away—much reverent desire for truth and light mingling itself with much boyish bravado, much rational and right-hearted endeavour giving place at times to unseemly imitation and deplorable audacity.

The difficulty which was at first most dwelt upon, and which most rudely disturbed the young poet's mind, arose from a vivid realization of the evils, public and private, which have been done, and are being done, in the name of Christianity and under the countenance of Christians throughout the world. It was natural to demand, Where is the title of this system to the divine origin it claims, if it is, as it appears to be, the direct cause of so much absolute misery, bloodshed, and wrong? And then he looked around him among the professors of Christianity, “pillars of the church,” whom he had himself known, and asked himself, what fruits the doctrines they professed had produced in *them*. Where was their charity, their forbearance, their probity, their love? He had seen the serpent reveal itself in many seeming-saintly souls, in his own short experience; and if one or two whom he could point to were indeed

upright and blameless, did he not find upright, blameless men whose theology was quite other than Christian; and was it not evident that the temperaments and circumstances of men *predisposed* them to gentleness and purity of life, or to the reverse? If this religion were divine, why did it not work greater miracles of reform, and diminish to nothing the evils of the earth? If it were indeed an effort of an all-powerful God to benefit his creatures, why, in the course of eighteen hundred years, had it been so grudgingly extended; and why, among those few to whom it had been—to all appearances so capriciously—vouchsafed, had it wrought so little absolute good? And if *this* religion were not a divine revelation, then where was any to be found with any claim to a divine origin? All were alike false, poor in their power of imparting happiness, prolific of evils; all striving against one another, fomenting wars and tumults, revelling in martyrdom by fire and by the sword, sowing dissensions between members of the same nations, the same societies, the same households. “Let them all go! They are vile. The world has grown too old to tolerate them longer!” And then would the clenched hand be shaken many a time at the church or conventicle passed by on the road, and the teeth gnashed at the priest or the parson as he darkened the sunlight in his “detestable black garb.”

But his mind, in its impetuous progress, could

not logically stop here. Under the government of religion there was pain, confusion, strife, destruction. What then? In the government of the *universe* there was an analogous flaw. Was the life of all sentient things not pain, incessant pain, from the first birth-agony to the final death-throe? Were not the best efforts of the best men to bring about "peace, happiness, and concord" perpetually and hopelessly baffled? Did not men wrong one another through miserable misunderstandings? Did not, in his own intimate experience, the virtuous suffer and the basest triumph? Was not the grossest injustice suffered to thrive unchecked, and the most benevolent effort to go unrewarded? Did not the "force of circumstance" suck away the purest and kindest feelings from the heart as it grew older, and turn the innocent and gentle child into the sin-stained, selfish, hard man? Were not the prayers of the righteous man breathed vainly upon the winds, and the cries for light and knowledge lifted up unheard? Was it not an universe of woe, of creatures living upon one another's misfortunes, death and pain supplying the means of life, life fashioned in its turn only for pain and death?

Approaching the problem of the universe still from the theological side rather than the scientific, he now found himself face to face with a stern, remorseless, pitiless tyrant, a Creator who amused

himself, far withdrawn within himself, in playing with the tortures of agonized worlds ; and the mood which arose within him in contemplating this hideous visionary Being was one of hatred, revolt, and defiance. He it was who was responsible for the horrors and miseries of the universe ; who suffered his creatures to rend one another in the darkness of their ignorance ; and who, perhaps—if the surmise of men were correct—had laid up in store for them eternal agonies in a world to which they were to pass, so soon as the vials of his wrath which he reserved for this had been poured out and exhausted upon them here. Away with him, too, if it be possible ; but, as it is not, then is there a greater exaltation of soul, a nobler, loftier life, in perpetually struggling against his will, though the strife be utterly in vain, than in tame and unprofitable submission. He has given at least the semblance of freedom to do this, and *pride*, the gratification of which is not unattended by a soothing sensation.

Painful, dark, and dismal as this mood was, it was not to be shaken aside in a moment ; and the period in which it was dominant—a period of unprecedented ferment of his whole nature, in which hard study, constant anxiety, and the blight of his first fair boyish love-dream, all combined to excite, to perplex, to embitter him—was, no doubt, the sombre and most critical of his life. And yet in all

that uncertainty of belief, as ever afterwards, to the last day of his life, not one foul stain sullied the white virginity of his soul ; and he aspired proudly to prove that a man might cherish no theological faith, and yet outshine the most orthodox professors in the practice of what were claimed as the Christian virtues.

About this time a vast number of the excellent people of Dublin had committed themselves to the teaching of a certain eloquent and persuasive preacher, who was accustomed to deliver exhortations on Sunday evenings in the largest secular assembly-room in the city, while the pastors of other Christian flocks were officiating, after their humdrum fashion, in consecrated buildings. There was no shadow of suspicion of rivalry in the movement. Doubtless the eloquent preacher believed, as his followers believed, that he had a special mission entrusted to him, and that he was taking the best means possible to discharge it ; and if the flocks from other sheep-cotes should happen to forsake their shepherds, and wander within the sound of his voice and the touch of his pastoral crook, it was the Lord's work and their own good fortune, not any merit or demerit of his. And that the bulk of other flocks did so forsake their shepherds—and more especially the ewes and the ewe-lambs of those flocks—was little to be wondered at ; for the preacher was indeed

of a goodly countenance, young, amiable, earnest, with a voice of the most mellow bass, and dark abundant hair, which fell even to his shoulders like a god's. He spoke with so much authority, and so little like the Scribes of those days, that the young infidel bethought him, in his obscurity, that here was a source from which perhaps some light might be obtained. Light from him, therefore, he resolved (not, I fear, without some slight touch of ironical intertention) to seek forthwith ; and, accordingly, a letter of considerable length was addressed to him, containing an elaborate statement of disturbing doubts ; begging him to consider these, and render the writer what assistance he could in dispelling them ; and promising that on a certain specified Sunday evening the anonymous infidel would be present in the vast assembly-room wherein the evangelist was wont to preach, in the hope that he might then hear some words to enlighten and to soothe. The letter was virtually a challenge ; it remained to be seen whether it would be accepted.

The evening named in due course of time came round, and the three young friends (for two had been admitted to the secret) found themselves early at the doors of the building, and soon side by side in front of the platform. The concourse of people in the room was enormous ; and the glare of the gas, the heat, the crushing, the eagerness, the excitement, gradually wrought most persons present to that

half-stifled, half-intoxicated state in which the extraordinary physical agitations known as "revivals" might be expected to take place at any moment. The three friends were studious observers of this remarkable spectacle. In order to obtain seats, there had been a rush to the room long before the hour at which the preacher was to appear. The decorum observed at the doors was on a level with that which one notices with admiration at the theatre-entrances on the nights called "boxing." The expectation of the multitude within-doors exceeded that of any audience in any theatre. By-and-by a half-crazed lay-preacher, calling himself "The Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ," well known in those days for his eccentric labours in the cause of the Gospel, rose suddenly, Bible in hand ; and, mounting a seat in the body of the hall, moved his arms for some moments in frantic dumb-show, and at last made himself dimly audible in the apostrophe, "Dear Christian friends !" He had got thus far, and everybody's eyes were turned to stare at him, and he had just completed the words, "Dear Christian friends, my brethren," when his legs were pulled from under him, and the form of the apostle disappeared, amid suppressed uproar, in a sea of perspiring heads. The three friends, still seeking light, observantly looked on. The tumult had just subsided, when another cry was raised of "Pull him down, put him out, shut him up ;" and all



heads were turned in an opposite direction, to where, like the ghost of Hamlet's father in the performance of certain tragedians, "The Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ" had started up to assert his divine ambassadorship once more. Various means of silencing an over-zealous "Servant of the Gospel" might suggest themselves to an ordinary intelligence; the three friends were now to be introduced to one to them at least then wholly new; scarcely had the words, "Dear Christian friends," again made themselves distinctly heard, when a very grave person, clothed in melancholy broadcloth, from another section of the hall arose, and in loud, and somewhat nasal, accents begged the assembly to repeat the Lord's Prayer. The shrewd suggestion was responded to as if by magic. The solemn words rolled up from every quarter of the room; and the last the three friends saw of "The Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ," was a gesticulating figure, waving wild arms over a vast multitude bent in prayer, and then suddenly diving headlong into their midst. In another moment there was a hush, and all eyes were turned towards the platform; the preacher had come upon the scene, and was kneeling silently in prayer.

He remained thus a very long time, and when he rose, seemed agitated beyond expectation. The three listened with some anxiety for his text, and foresaw what was coming when he read out in deep

and ominous accents, "I preach the gawspel of Chroist cru-u-cified, to the Jèw-ws a stùm-m-bling-block, and to the Gree-eeks fòo-lishness." After a pause he proceeded to state that he had received a letter, within the past fortnight or three weeks, revealing on the part of the writer a state of mind at once deplorable and alarming. He hoped the writer was not in earnest ; he feared there was too good reason to believe that he was. An abstract of the contents of the letter was then given, and an attempt made to reason against the various doubts suggested ; and it is no disparagement of the eloquent and fervent preacher to say that the arguments employed varied little from the old and well-known stock-arguments of the defenders of Christianity, most of which the perplexed inquirer had already sifted, and found, as he believed, insufficient. Much of the defence was indeed mere dogmatic assertion ; and, in the main, the discourse was that of one who believed he had secured his own salvation, felt deeply for those poor souls who were still wandering in darkness, but had little help to offer except the exhortation to "believe ;" which would be potent in its effects if it pleased the Almighty Ruler of the universe to make it so—if not, otherwise. But when he descended from the atmosphere of reason and persuasion to the low grounds of terrorism, his hold over the unbeliever was quite gone. It was vain to speak of the

terrors of Hell to one who had yet to be shown the proofs of the existence of Hell ; it was vain to paint in vivid colours the horrors of the deathbed of an imaginary infidel to a youth to whom the death-scene of Socrates was a beautiful reality. And so the young questioner went his way, with a feeling of affectionate respect for the man who had responded thus straightforwardly to his challenge ; but with less reverence for the creed he had advocated, less confidence in arguments which he had advanced in its favour ; and a sense of the absurdity of the surroundings of the Christian faith, which the earlier proceedings of the evening had strained to an inordinate pitch.

I mention this incident (trifling enough, perhaps, in itself) as a single example of the way in which the religion of Christ was now made, by the action of its zealous supporters, to appear to him in a weak or a ludicrous light. Jesus Christ himself seemed to him the incarnation of all the weaknesses and follies of his modern followers ; and as yet he was not able to contemplate the New Testament narrative apart from the accretions of ridiculous interpretation, and the theories and fancies which had agglomerated about it from such sources. The Christian religion became for a time a laughing-stock, the Christian deity a monstrous dream.

By-and-by the notion of a personal God was abandoned, as being unsupported by adequate evidence ;

and it seemed preferable to reject the idea of a deity altogether, than to attribute the creation and government of an universe, apparently so botched and mismanaged, to an all-powerful, intelligent, and *cruel* Being. He passed from the attitude of defiance to one of moderate indifference, not unmingled with cynicism; and by October, 1858, he had arrived at a kind of undeveloped materialism, which he then formulated, with some touch of sardonic humour, in the following lines :—

“PROFESSIO, QUID SENTIO DE REBUS.

“The World revolves upon its axis,  
And nought of human toil relaxes  
On its crust; the dust of billions  
Mingles with the clay of millions  
Aye and aye: the breathing clay  
Dwindles into dust away.  
Dissolution reigns for ever!  
Nothing Death from Death shall sever!  
Death is Life and Life is Death!  
Breathless clay and clay with breath!  
Life is Death—the endless motion  
Of a dead, putrescent ocean!  
Death is Life—a transient being  
Without feeling, without seeing!  
Adam lives in atomies,  
In men, in beasts, in rocks, and trees.  
Adam is I, I am Adam.  
I have lived eternally—  
And as things are, so let them be! *Amen.*”

Shortly before the production of this “confession,” his family had taken up their temporary residence

a seaside-place some miles from Dublin, and there he remained throughout the following winter, prosecuting his studies with unabating diligence—a period of heavy work and continued mental agitation. Moonlight walks by the sea, readings deep and delightful in English and Italian literature, the composition of some very wild and tumultuous poetry (which he afterwards ruthlessly destroyed), and conversations on poetry, on Greek philosophy, on theology—the ghost which would not be laid,—diversified his close and severe application, which revealed to him each day more and more early how much he had yet to do, to make up for a time, if he would attain that accuracy which he had sacrificed in his rapturous pursuit of knowledge in its wider fields.

Very welcome to him at this moment was the society of an eccentric, kind-hearted college “grinder,” for whose tuition he had placed himself, in order to prepare for examinations in Dublin University, which were to take place in the following year. The late Mr. W\*\*\*\* was for many years a well-known character in Trinity College, Dublin; inhabited rooms with the smallest possible amount of furniture and the least imaginable degree of comfort; living, as was supposed, a vast treasure; and talking about, otherwise, in an atmosphere of the deepest mystery. Goodnatured, painstaking, humorous, his bright, cheerful face seldom without a

pleasant smile, an excellent scholar, a most successful teacher, Mr. W\*\*\*\* was universally liked, and generally sought by aspirants after classical honours in the College. It was a peculiar crotchet of his to address every one to whom he spoke as "Doctor." All his pupils were "Doctors." "Now," he would say, "Doctor Alcibiades, go on you there; now, Doctor Tacitus, translate." And, as a natural consequence, he was himself, among his pupils, Doctor Maximus—"The Doctor." "Be accurate"—"Be a-a-currat, Dawktor"—summed up the doctrinal counsel of this excellent guide of youth. The "Doctor" took a great fancy to the young poet his pupil, and the latter a great liking to the "Doctor;" and they had frequent long walks and many conversations together, very pleasant to the younger of the two; and the somewhat singular companionship exercised no little influence upon Armstrong's intellect and spirits at this particular juncture. He delighted in odd characters, and the "Doctor's" views were sufficiently broad for the time and place, and withal of a cheerful, hopeful colour; and the occasional unconstrained discussions of topics which troubled the younger friend, and which among his elders generally it was not easy to debate, tended to ease the burthen of his anxiety not a little; while the Doctor's dry jokes on certain sects and religious leaders threw an air of drollery over what he had rated so seriously, and intensified his own humourous appreciation of

its absurder aspects. "Listen to Blow-the-Trumpet preaching, Dawktor ! Why, I would as soon listen to a big drum. I tell you what it is, he's an arrant humbug ; but then he's got the phosphorus of the Evangelical Party rubbed upon his posteriors, Dawktor, and he gets on in the world, he gets on."<sup>1</sup>

And, indeed, of cheerful influences he stood sorely enough in need. It was a time of chaotic thought and chaotic feelings. In a note appended afterwards to a poem entitled *Ahasuerus*, a tumultuous and confused lyric of this date, he writes :—  
 "This I consider a wretched production, yet *it is a faithful picture of my wretched mind in May, 1859.*" But he had then passed through the gloomiest defile. In January, 1859, he thus ridiculed, in jaunty doggerel, yet with a sombre earnestness underlying the jesting words, a theory of the universe which he had for a time entertained, and then dismissed at least with reverence :—

"ΑΙΝΙΓΜΑ ΘΑΥΜΑΣΤΟΝ.

"Two beings playing at chess,  
 One with three heads, t' other with a tail !  
 He with the tail knows he'll be beat ;  
 And three-heads knows so too.  
 And they sweep the chessmen off the board.  
 What are the stakes ? The eternal possession  
 Of the beat player—that's he with the tail.  
 D'ye doubt he'll fail, the fellow with the tail ?  
 I say he'll fail, the fellow with the tail.

<sup>1</sup> See below, Letter of March 17, 1861.

I bet a pint of ale that the fellow with the tail  
 Will fail, fail, fail, fail, fail, fail, fail.  
 And he with the tail knows he'll fail ;  
 He knows he'll fail, the fellow with the tail—  
 Yes, and he *shall* fail, the fellow with the tail !  
 Wail ! wail ! wail !”

He had indeed, for the moment, apparently let slip even the earnest desire for truth, in despair of finding it—apparently, but not so in reality ; for the true heart that had broken out thus in mockery and laughter, as if for relief from the pain of overwrought powers sorely baffled in righteous endeavour, would soon re-assert itself in statelier expression. Meanwhile, he lapsed into a state of cynical indifference, and wrote—

“ EPIGRAM.

“ WRITTEN ON THE 25TH JANUARY, 1859, 4 O'CLOCK IN  
 THE MORNING.

“ This day I'm either small or great.  
 I'll leave it all to Madame Fate.  
 And what care I if asses prate  
 One thing or t' other? Proud, elate,  
 Or if I stand at Fame's back gate,  
 Or in the rafters stick my pate,  
 I'll spend my life in shabby ease,  
 A *κβσμος* for a race of fleas,  
 Or, strutting in my walk,  
 I'll cackle with my fellow geese,  
 A lumen of the flock !

*Amen.*”

From this mood he passed into one which con-



tinued to grow more and more fantastic; and when his bosom-friend fell sick in the February following, and lay at death's door, the gloomy suggestions of the moment found embodiment in words like these:—

“TO G. B. WHILE LABOURING UNDER A DANGEROUS  
ILLNESS, FEBRUARY 5, 1859.

“Shake, shake, quake, quake,  
Human automaton !  
Quake, quake, shake, shake ;  
The day of death comes on !  
Quake, shake, shake, quake ;  
’T is a game for heaven or hell,  
An orchestra grand, or a brimstone lake—  
This little life. Who can tell ?”

And a few days afterwards he wrote the following grim-mirthful medley; approaching in it, no doubt, as near the edge of the bottomless pit as a sane mind may safely venture :—

“*February 11, 1859.*

“TO BE OR NOT TO BE.

(A melo-dramatic monologue.)

“SCENE. *A Railway Terminus.*

I.

“Shall I put my head under the train ?

Eh ?

I ask my soul again and again.

Courage was strong but now.

Am I sane or am I insane ?

Eh ? Eh ? Eh ?

O, I am aweary with damnable woe !

*Semi-chorus.* Fol-de-di-do-dee-do !

## 2.

“What ’ll become of this piece of clay?

Eh?

A walking mound, half Winter, half May,

’T will fall to the ground without delay!

Will suicide pay or will it not pay?

Eh? Eh? Eh?

O, I am confounded with doubt, rage, and woe!

*Full-chorus.* Fol-de-di-do-dee-do!

[*Da capo.*”

With these and such like utterances of despair and pain and bitterness he would now at intervals disturb his intimate companions; and the laughter with which he would sometimes accompany them was never from the heart. For these verses, however fantastic, are no burlesque or *jeu d’esprit*, but indicate a veritable condition of thought and feeling, in his own estimation so important in the history of his life that, in all the destruction wreaked upon his works by his own hands, he carefully preserved them, for his “future self,” as he wrote, to “pore upon,” and glean instruction from them. But lower in the sulphurous crater of doubt and despair and tumultuous and conflicting passions it was impossible for him to go, with any hope of return to the pure sweet air from which he had descended with such impetuous feet. One other lyric, of far different cast, but indicating a cause of agony which, as I have said, superadded itself to so many others, he has retained

from this date, and adopted, with an additional stanza, in *The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael*—the little lyric “ Boom, storm-bell,” often singled out for praise among his various poems :—

“ Boom, storm-bell,  
Swing from thy rusted chain,  
Boom away and away  
Over the darkling main !  
And I will walk with folded arms,  
And I will walk alone,  
And I will talk to the winds and the waves  
Of the love that is over and gone.”

And frequently throughout his later poems I perceive reversions to this dismal time; for he always regarded it as the most trying period through which he had passed; and the cloud which darkened him cast a shadow over his two chief associates, which they also looked back to with a shudder. It will be sufficient to cite one or two such passages; the following, for example, from *The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael*, which rises foremost in my recollection:—

"A spirit from the abyss possessed my sense,  
And changed my soul to gall. A stifling gloom  
Curtailed the lovely world, and hid the sun,  
And folded truth and love and innocence  
And beauty in a shroud. The blossomed trees  
Were plumes upon a funeral-car ; the herb  
Was black as trappings of the coffined dead ;  
The earth I trod on was a mouldering corpse.  
. . . . All forms were changed  
To blight and ruin."

And again, in more direct reference, this :—

“ O fallen, fallen is the soul  
That once was strong, that once was free !  
O faded dream of life and love !  
O bleeding heart ! O broken light !  
O cloud-enamoured, who but strove  
To grasp a vision of the night ! ”

But now, as the spring of the year 1859 was advancing, the clouds seemed to roll gently away.

When summer came, he rested awhile from his studies, and went on a visit to an uncle in England, whose living was within a day's walk of the Peak; a pleasant visit to him, as it enabled him to see Peveril Castle for the first time and explore the Devil's Cavern, made doubly interesting by their associations with Scott and Byron. The Peak district delighted him; he remembered it ever afterwards with fondness; and his last distant ramble was a tour on foot, several years afterwards, through its most beautiful scenes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An old coachman who drove the coach in which he rode from Macclesfield to Buxton had interested and amused him by his conversation; and many months afterwards, the image of the man's jolly face happening to arise in his memory, he started up suddenly, and said: “I am *sure* that old Buxton fellow is the identical coachman that drove me from Peel to Castletown in the Isle of Man in the year 1853. I'll write and ask him;” which he accordingly did, and to his great delight: received an affirmative answer a few days later. As he was only a boy of twelve when he rode from Peel to Castletown, this incident speaks well for his faculty of observation

Towards the end of July he returned home, and on the 1st August he writes to his uncle, giving an account of his experience of Wales :—" I spent a pleasant day at Bangor, saw all that could be seen in so short a space, and met N\*\*\*\*\* at the appointed hour . . . . I crossed and recrossed the bridge at Bangor, and, walking by the adjoining road, pored upon the beauties of the Menai Straits for fully two hours. The sun was shining, steamers were paddling, yachts plying to and fro, and Cambrians gibbering Welsh on all sides. I saw several specimens of Welsh women with steeple-like hats. Everything there is Welsh ; N\*\*\*\*\* says, ' Even the horses plough in Welsh there ! ' . . . We had a delightful passage, and I beheld with great pleasure the sun rising over the waters of the Channel, in the grey dawn, and slowly unveiling the aery peaks of the Wicklow Mountains."

And indeed he returned in high good-humour, and recommenced his studies with a light and hopeful heart. " This day five weeks," he says, writing to the Reverend Dr. Armstrong on the 1st September—" this day five weeks, and the day following, I shall be in the Examination Hall, the knowledge-market of Dublin, displaying, with what effect I may be able, whatever wares I may have

and the retentiveness of his memory. But he had always a singular power of observing and remembering faces and characters.—ED.

accumulated in the store-house of my brain, and trying to impose the lumber of that heterogeneous repository for warrantable articles . . . . I am getting on very well with Hebrew, and with mathematics better than I expected . . . . I have read the best part of Hume's English History, and an intensely interesting study I find it . . . and *I have improved in swimming considerably.*" The next month he entered Trinity College, Dublin, obtaining one of the highest places; and in November presented himself for Prizes in Greek and Latin Composition, and carried away the first prize for each, on very distinguished answering; and thus he writes the particulars of his victory:—"I put in 53 original Greek verses, on the subject of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, in an hour and a half, in the Examination Hall. This piece, along with the selections of English poetry which I translated into Greek verse, makes up a total of 109 Greek verses." This number, I have been informed, exceeded any then known to have been achieved in the Hall by a Junior Freshman in the same specified time; and outstripped the prizemen below him by nearly half. "I put in," he continues, "48 original Latin verses, containing three long similes, on the subject of the *Battle of Actium*, in an hour and a half, and the total verse, lyric and heroic, was 100." And this also, I am given to understand, was then an unprecedented number in Trinity College,

Dublin. He next presented himself at the examination for the Hebrew Prizes, and secured the only one that was given on the occasion.

In the midst of his labours and successes, he had been renewing his acquaintance with the Border poetry and traditions, in the hope of being able to make a "raid" into the Border dales in the following summer; and in October, in a letter to his uncle, he wrote about them enthusiastically, thus:—

LETTER I. (*To the Rev. John Echlin Armstrong, D.D.*)—"Oct. 29, 1859. . . . These ballads have no phantasmagoria in their machinery . . . This absence of an element peculiarly Gothic constitutes a wide distinction between the Scottish ballad and the mediæval romance. An air of reality is the characteristic of the former; whereas few things are more piquant, more fresh, more fanciful than the charming caprices of the imagination of the middle ages. Feudal society revives in them entire, with all its fairy doings, its knightly fictions, its manners, and its grand lance-thrusts; and such is the interest of the tale that we allow ourselves to be carried away by it with as much pleasure as our ancestors must have felt, when it was told to the sound of the minstrel's viol in the great castle-hall, or beneath the shadow of the tent. The epic complexion of Border poetry affords a contrast to the literature of Greece and Rome, which, however admirable in form, is but sober in invention . . .

“Of course we cannot look for historic testimony in support of some of these tales, in which unimportant adventures have been deepened into the wildest romance, imaginary feats invested in the most glowing colours, immemorial feuds raised to the most disproportioned magnitude by the prodigal imaginations and affluent fancies of the bards. However, in these cases, we shall not trouble ourselves with attempting to discriminate between fact and fiction, but rest content with the assurance that the personages, localities, and manners at least really existed, however the achievements may be embellished with poetic figment. We learn from these ballads that the Armstrong family attained its power and eminence by its surpassing qualities of strength and valour, and by its success and craft in guerilla warfare. It is curious to reflect that while England was, in the reign of Henry VIII. (the Bluebeard of English history), holding the balance of power between France and Germany, our ancestors were continually making descents upon the territory of that mighty nation from their mountain fastnesses, and annoying the inhabitants of Cumberland and Northumberland by their unceasing depredations. Strange fellows, those Armstrongs of Liddesdale! We can almost fancy we see them on their curvetting steeds, careering in predatory detachments through the valleys and glens of the Cheviot Hills, with their



tough Jeddart staves depending from their saddle-bows, and their hale and muscular frames mailed to the throat—

'They quitted not their harness bright,  
Neither by day, nor yet by night :  
They lay down to rest,  
With corselet laced,  
Pillow'd on buckler cold and hard ;  
They carv'd at the meal  
With gloves of steel,  
And they drank the red wine through the helmet barr'd.'

"We can almost fancy we hear the 'slogan,' or war-cry of the clan, reverberated through the vales, taken up and reiterated from crag to crag, hill-top to hill-top, from Liddesdale to Teviotdale, from the battlements of the stately castle to the humbler walls of the Border fortress ; while lances gleam and falchions flash in the brilliant rays of the rising sun, as he throws a flood of gold over rock and wood and water, and reveals the mountains beyond displayed in the grandeur of their innumerable outline, varied by prominent and rugged masses, on which the bale or beacon-fagot blazes to warn the clansmen for miles around of the approach of the English foe. We fancy them now closing in the deadly encounter—a fiery handful amid a vast host ; now practising the same harassing system of warfare as Fabius the Lingerer, the Shield of Rome, or Shamyl and his Murids against the Russian

aggressor among the ridges and ravines of Caucasus. Again, we see the herdsmen of the clan retreating to the morasses, and occasionally into caves, remains of which may be seen, says Sir Walter Scott, "in the precipitous banks of the Teviot at Sunlaws, upon the Ale at Ancram, upon the Jed at Hundalee, and in many other places upon the Border." We fancy the hardy rustics in the dark winter-nights, when the snow hangs in icicles at the cavern's mouth, telling each other thrilling stories of the mighty feats of the Laird's Jock, or the Laird's Wat, as,

‘ Wi’ spur on heel, and splent on spauld,  
And gloves of green and feathers blue,’

he charged and overthrew a band of English troopers, and cut his way back without scath to his friends. And, above all, we see the grey-haired minstrel, broken with years, smiting the strings of his harp, and sending fire into the breasts of the listeners by recounting, in unpremeditated verse, the marvellous exploits of hoary eld. No venal poet he, ready to transfer from chief to chief the eulogies of craven sycophancy ; but a bard whose heart was in his clan's welfare, a passionate improvisatore. The bard used to be borne on a prancing palfrey to battle, to cheer the dauntless and invigorate the despondent upon their march ; and, again, to enliven the banquet when wine and wassail began to pall, and the warriors, from the dais-throne to the lowest

table (where sat the retainers and dependents), began to desire the intellectual enjoyment of poesy.

"By tales of noble acts the undeveloped intellects of our ancestors were nurtured from the cradle, by the narration of deeds of high emprise they were fostered; and when they reached manhood, and buckled on the corslet and assumed the lance and the morion, the examples of their forefathers were ever present, and exercised the same powerful and imperishable influence as the epic, tragic, and lyric poetry bestowed upon the Hellenic mind of yore. Mighty chieftains who had fallen in the field enjoyed the privilege of burial on the scene of their death; the cairns raised over their bodies still remain to attest the spot. Cinerary urns, containing the pulverized ashes of the heroes, have been exhumed from the interior of many of those ancient tumuli,—a rude imitation of the Roman rite. And whenever the young clansman looked upon those memorials of the past, his heart beat quicker, and his blood flowed more freely, and aspirations for immortality stirred within him; while, in his memory, as if by the charmed wand of Circe, arose in quick succession the traditions of transcendent prowess with which he had been familiarized from his earliest infancy. To those unreasoning and imaginative mountaineers poetry occupied the place of history. To those wild and warlike tribes, the ballad—crowded as it was with poetic extrava-

gances, embellished as it was with preternatural disguises—was the vehicle which conveyed from generation to generation the outlines of actual history ; imprinted character upon the plastic minds of its hearers ; and inculcated moral truths which were destined to make a lasting impression, and to bind together the members of each clan in indissoluble union.—Believe me, my dear uncle, your most affectionate nephew, EDMUND JOHN ARMSTRONG.”

CHAPTER IV. 1859-1860. ÆT. 18—.

A Poetical Retrospect.—Search for Light renewed.—Want felt of a Belief in a Personal Deity.—The Principle of Good : the Principle of Evil.—Love, the Spirit of Good: its Worship.—More Poems.—Dogged and Incessant Intellectual Exertions.—Illustrative Extracts from Diary of 1860.—Fresh University Successes.—A Picture of Relaxation.—More Illustrative Extracts from Diary.—Madcap Frolics at the Opera, and in Trinity College, Dublin.—Continuous steady hard work.—Passion for the Opera.—Indisposition.—Hazardous Walks.—A Terrible Calamity.—Career stopped.

THE summer and early autumn of 1859 passed pleasantly and lightly enough away, amid new scenes and many achievements; and that mood of intense mental agitation and agony which had darkened the preceding autumn and winter, did not again return. But his desire for truth had not in reality abated; and if he forbore for a while to renew his investigations with vigour and persistency, it was only to allow his judgment and his feelings to regain their balance, so as to enable him to proceed with less probability of defeat.

On the 25th of October, he records, in a poetical retrospect, the history of his mental transition, in

the stanzas, from which I have already had occasion to make extracts, commencing,

“ By flowery paths of lawn and heath,  
Among the vales, amid the hills,  
We wandered—”

stanzas appropriately addressed, with a petition for forgiveness for any injury which he might have inflicted, to the acquaintance with whom the memorable conversation had been opened in the ruined tower. When he wrote this poem he was without a creed ; but the retrospect, as retrospects often will, roused him to sudden revived activity ; and he was not long in discovering within himself the possibility of advance.

“ The founts of hope are parched and dried ;  
And I am wedded to a bride—  
That bride is Darkness, by the rood ! ”

So he had ended ; but a light, whether it should prove an *ignis fatuus* or not, was about to spring up, and beguile him into new paths.

I have said that one of the principal doubts which perplexed him at the outset of his scepticism was the apparent irreconcilability of the pain and travail of the universe with the theory of government by a benevolent personality. Having cleared his mind of an early conception of God, which he had imbibed from a distorted Christianity, he was able to approach the question of the government of the

world with unbiassed judgment, and was, perhaps, in a fairer way of arriving at a truthful solution. Granting that there was no omnipotent and responsible controller of things, it was at least apparent that there was in the universe a struggle between forces tending to good and happy results and forces tending to discomfort and evil. With the former he could sympathize ; nay, was he not already struggling on their side, endeavouring to overcome falsehood, ignorance, lethargy, passion, vice in its many forms ; endeavouring to develop his nobler faculties, tastes, and feelings ; to give expression to the best thoughts and visions and aspirations that visited him ? With the freedom of choice which was his, or at least with the semblance of freedom of which he was conscious, he would range himself now under the banner of these beneficent forces, and fight there, not as before, in the attitude of rebellion against an all-powerful tyrant, but as the loyal soldier of a beloved king, contending against his foe.

His temperament, so emotional and imaginative, had suffered keenly from the want of some personal God, and some *hope* to lean upon. It now found consolation and encouragement in a vision of Virtue struggling against Evil, with the prospect of perhaps ultimate triumph. He had already so far personified this power as to be able, in November, 1859, to apostrophize it in words which contrast

curiously with some above quoted, evolved out of somewhat similar circumstances—

“ My fate, my portion in the strife  
Of this strange world, my after-life  
With all its hopes and fears,  
Rest on the issue of To-day.  
SPIRIT OF GOODNESS, chase away  
The cloud that gathers o’er me now,  
The fire that wreathes my aching brow,  
The intermitting thrill  
That tingles through my frame ; the throb  
That heaves my breast ; the thoughts that rob  
Mine eyes of sleep ! O, let me bow  
Submissive to Thy will ! ”

A few steps further in the same direction brought him back, not without satisfaction to himself, to a recognition of one of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity. In human affairs, at least, the most potent minister of the spirit (or principle) of goodness was *love*. Sympathy of man with man, charity, gentleness,—these were virtues the cultivation of which must tend to lighten the burthen of the world’s pain, and to bring about that order and harmony against which a spirit (or principle) of evil seemed perpetually contending. In the January of 1860, as one day he wandered out alone towards the mountains, meditating on this theme, and gradually, as he felt, emerging from the intense darkness in which for so long his mind had seemed to stumble miserably on its way, the brightening of the heavens,



and the sudden kindling up of the mountain-tops here and there in the sunbeams, as they broke through the winter clouds, appeared to him so like a picture of his own happier condition that his heart gladdened within him; and he sat down by the road-side, and with his pencil wrote the following lines:—

“O Holy Love, the night is past  
When glooms of sorrow hovered o’er  
My soul—a dim and dreary waste,—  
A dreary waste no more.

For in the sweet and balmy air  
I hear a whisper of delight,  
That bids me never more despair,  
But battle for the right.

Though on the crags, the vales, the rills,  
So long an icy winter lay,  
The *gloom* is gone, and o’er the hills  
Appears a brighter day!”

“I only insert this trifle,” he writes in his MS. book, as a note to these lines, “to fill up a chasm in the psychological chronicle which I have kept” since the date of the composition of one of the first of his poems. As such it had significance for him, and he appended it, in his book, as a sequel to those prospective stanzas “To G. A. C.” descriptive of his earlier experiences.

His studies were now continued with increasing zeal. Always energetic, enthusiastic, and resolute,

when he had once undertaken to perform any duty or complete any work, he would toil without cessation, at every sacrifice of ease, and without the admission of the slightest desire for rest. Other students of his standing rose early, read many hours of the day, and kept the lamp burning far into the night. But few attempted to accomplish as much as he. For his desire of college honours was a small ingredient in the motives of his labour. His thirst for knowledge was insatiable ; his thinking was as ceaseless as his bodily action ; and he was seldom without some dream or feeling which demanded impatiently to be clothed in verse or in prose. A Diary which he kept during this year, 1860, illustrates the state of activity in which he lived ; and the following are a few extracts from it, taken almost at random :—

“ *Monday, Jan. 2.*—Rose at 4 A.M. Ground with W\*\*\*\* ; finished *Meidias*. Read, at University Reading Rooms, encomium in the *Times* on Lord Macaulay, who died on Wednesday, Dec. 29, at Kensington ; *Sea-Dreams*, by Alfred Tennyson, in *Macmillan's Magazine*—a retrogression, nay, rather a degradation, in the Laureate's art: it is certainly true to nature . . . Did not satisfy myself in my reading.

“ *Tuesday, Jan. 3.*—Rose at 5 A.M. Read *Archias*. Wrote Latin Verse and Latin Prose . . . .

“ *Wednesday, Jan. 4.*—Rose at 3½ A.M. Read *Lex Manilia*. Ground with W\*\*\*\*. . . .

"*Thursday, Jan. 5.*—Rose at 8½. Headache all day. Read *Ligarius* with W\*\*\*\*. Read Peacock's *Memorials* of P. B. Shelley in *Frazer's Maga.* . . . .

"*Friday, Jan. 6.*—Rose at 4 A.M. Read half 2nd *Philippic* (Cic.). Wrote verse. Ground with W\*\*\*\*. Headache all day, to relieve which I walked to ——. In vain. A baseless morbid feeling pervades me, sometimes breaking out in sardonic irony . . . .

"*Saturday, Jan. 7.*—Rose at 3½ A.M. Read 2nd half of 2nd *Phil.* (Cic.) . . . Invited B. to tea. Read with him (of course) a lot of poetry, and talked in the usual barren strain, with here and there a sweet blossom . . .

"*Sunday, Jan. 8.*—Rose at 8½ A.M. Scandalous laziness. Went to College Chapel . . . 'Round Church' burnt to the ground between 9 and 11 this morning. Visited it still in flames. Thence to Christ's. Anthem, 1st chap. *Genesis*, from the *Creation*. Read Müller on Demosthenes. Wrote composition . . . .

"*Monday, Jan. 9.*—Rose at 3½. Walked (after a stupid read) round by ——. Went to B.'s house. He was in bed, sick . . . . Ground with W\*\*\*\*. Read also at University Reading Rooms. Wrote Latin Prose in the waiting-room of the Kingstown Railway [Station].

"*Tuesday, Jan. 10.*—Rose at 5½. Read. Ground

with W\*\*\*\*. Came home. Went over to B., who is very ill. Renewed my injunction that if he should happen to die first, he should haunt me, in as friendly a manner as possible, remembering my delicate nervous system . . . Read all evening. Complete machine. Bed at 11½.

“ *Wednesday, Jan. 11.*—Rose at 3½. Read all day . . . . B. in bed all day. Hope the ghost will appear in a decent way . . . All my observations are, as they ought to be, confined to my books to-day. Ground with W\*\*\*\*. Complete machine. Bed at 11½.

“ *Thursday, Jan. 12.*—Rose at 3½. Wrote a very pretty Latin verse translation of Tennyson's *The Brook; an Idyl*. Ground with W\*\*\*\* . . . B. still in bed. I am always in an ‘awful fright’ in the mornings lest I may see my friend walking in through the door in grave-clothes, the door still remaining closed . . .

“ *Friday, Jan. 13.*—Rose at 4½. Read. Ground with W\*\*\*\*. Wrote in the evening a Greek verse translation of part of Mrs. Hemans' *Alcestis*. Also Greek prose . . . Rather unprecedented my neglect of poetry this week . . .

“ *Tuesday, Jan. 17.*—Rose at 8½. Had toothache all night. Consequently was unprepared for W\*\*\*\*. Did not grind. B. very poorly indeed. Said I was very heartless (to T.). That is true. But if I love any one, I love him . . . Read 3 *Olynthiacs*

very carefully ; the 3rd time. . . . Wrote in Lat. Alcaics part of Gray's *Progress of Poesy* . . .

"Tuesday, Jan. 18.—Rose at 3¼ . . ."

On Friday, the 27th of the same month, he records that he has obtained the Premium for Classical Composition at Term Lectures. On the 30th he writes that he has read Mr. Tennyson's *Tithonus*, which had just then appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*—"Tithonus Tennyson's best, say I, in the full flush of a first reading." On the Wednesday following the Examination for Honours in Classics for the Junior Freshman Class, in Trinity College, took place, and he went in, coming out a First Honour Man—the second on the list.

It might have been natural, perhaps, if he had now relaxed a little. But his ambition was, as I have said, not limited by the attainment of the distinctions of a college ; and, besides this, other examinations of importance lay not very far in the future. Instead of rising, as he had done more or less regularly for some months, at half-past three in the morning, and going to bed at eleven or half-past eleven at night—thereby giving himself about four hours for sleep, of which one at least was often spent in tossing restlessly in thought—he now rose at about five o'clock, and went to bed at about twelve. Instead of moderate strolls, he now took long vigorous tramps in the country, and, not unfrequently, spent an hour or two of the day in running, jumping, and

kicking the football. And, meantime, his studies were continued, more miscellaneous reading indulged in, and more original writing attempted in every otherwise unoccupied moment. He had established his reputation in the University, and much was expected of him, alike by his friends, his teachers, and his fellow-students; and he felt that he must still go on. And as for exertion, it seemed as nothing to him; his faith, as that of his friends, in his vigorous and robust constitution was unbounded; and his broad shoulders, deep chest, and strong limbs were indeed those of a youth who could afford to put a severe tax upon his vital resources. And so he went cheerfully ahead. A few more extracts, taken here and there from his memoranda, will illustrate his notions of a period of relaxation:—

“*Friday, Feb. 10.*—Rose at 5½. Read with invincible laziness a few lines of Homer. Read in the Dub. Soc.<sup>1</sup> two books of Homer, but soon desisted, and took up *Kenilworth*, which I nearly finished. Came home. Legs dreadfully stiff after yesterday’s Herculean exertions. Read Macaulay’s *History of England*, and went fast asleep. Muddled John-o’-dreams! Bed at 10½.

“*Saturday, Feb. 11.*—Rose at 5½. Read fiercely for an hour *Phænissæ*, and indulgently turned to Macaulay. Went to the Dub. Soc. and finished *Kenilworth*—thank the Lord! Met W\*\*\*\*t at

<sup>1</sup> Library of the Royal Dublin Society.—Ed.

the Reading Room ; walked with, and chatted with, ditto. Home. Read Macaulay, and went to bed early . . . Not well.

"*Sunday, Feb. 12.*—College Chapel. Donellan Lecture—Dr. Atkins. Very good. . . . Home with great difficulty, since my whole constitution is out of order ; and I have a deucedly sore nose, to boot, which renders me very unhappy, and thereby refutes one of Paley's premises. . . .

"*Thursday, Feb. 16.*—Rose at 5½. Read. Went with B. to God-knows-where, on a constitutional. B. is a walking tomb, a locomotive sepulchre. Went to College, and met W\*\*\*\*t ; went to the Park ; saw a football-match. . . .

"*Saturday, Feb. 18.*—Rose at 5½. Read pretty fairly to-day. Played football with G\*\*\*\*\* and B\*\* M\*\*\*\*\* in back field. Read in the evening satisfactorily. . . .

"*Monday, Feb. 20.*—Rose at 4½. . . . Ordered *Sartor Resartus*. . . . Read everything prescribed.

"*Tuesday, Feb. 21.*—Did not rise till 8½. Did not read a word. Went to College. Comitia Verna. Lord Lieutenant there ; Sir John Lawrence got his LL.D. ; frightful row ! I got up on the Monument with M\*\*\*\*\* and P. B\*\*\*\*\*, and we were hunted down ; had to subside into the crowd. Got Carlyle's *Hero-Worship* and *Sartor Resartus*, and read. Like them prodigiously. . . . Splendid Aurora Borealis. Bed at 12."

His old love of frolic, which, like his sense of

the ludicrous—the two being mutually involved—he could never resist to his latest day, got the better of him at the Comitia Verna, as it did a few evenings later at the Theatre Royal. Had the opera on the latter occasion been anything loftier than *La Traviata*, I have no doubt his indignation against his fellow-deities would have been fierce and demonstrative, as it ever was when good music was interrupted by the unseemly noises of that boisterous assembly; but on this occasion he was at one with them:—“*Monday, Feb. 27.*—Rose at 4½. Read with imperturbable pertinacity. Went with W\*\*\*\*t to the ‘gods.’ ‘Pelted’ between us the incredible number of 31 oranges! . . . *La Traviata*—Piccolomini.” And the disturbance that night seems to have been more than ordinarily outrageous; in the next day’s entry he records—“Three medical students sentenced by \*\*\*\*, the magistrate, to one fortnight’s imprisonment and the treadmill, in consequence of last night’s row;” but whether or not he had been misinformed as to the exact nature and degree of the punishment inflicted it does not appear.

At this time he frequently attended at the debates in the College Historical Society, and in the Philosophical Society of Dublin University; and, in connection with the former, mentions Mr. W. E. H. Lecky (since distinguished as the author of the *History of Rationalism*) and the Hon. David Plunket (late Her Majesty’s eloquent Solicitor-General for



Ireland) as its foremost speakers. His perusals of Shakespeare were now again constant and close ; and many a delightful evening was spent with his two oldest and closest friends, in reading a play, or *Sartor Resartus*, or some other fresh book ; or in debating a literary or a philosophic question, each discussion being preluded with an "æsthetic tea." *Sartor Resartus*, picturing many phases of thought and emotion so closely resembling those through which he had himself passed during the two preceding years, came bearing influences of the most healthful and invigorating kind ; and perhaps its primary good result was the mental relief it afforded by casting into an objective mould, in which he might calmly and critically examine them as an external observer, the pent-up agonies which had been so long racking the secret bosom and wearying the introverted eye.

The opera being in Dublin this spring, as we have seen, he was sure to be a spectator as often as was within the limits of possibility. That passionate love of music, indeed, which had manifested itself from his earliest childhood ; which had led him from cathedral to cathedral, from concert to concert ; and which often had drawn him away for miles (as has been narrated) at the sound of a military band, playing gay march or funeral dirge ; seemed to find in the opera its richest and most varied enjoyment.

On the evening of the 7th March, he had gone to the theatre with his old friend and companion of many mountain rambles, and had been an enraptured listener to music then to him quite new. It was a night of large and elevated pleasure, and his mind was filled with the most delightful dreams. When the opera was over—as he had a long way to go, and intended walking home, according to his wont—he was hurrying down the stairs, when he slipped, and his ankle turned under him. The wrench gave him acute pain, and on attempting to set off upon his walk, he found himself unable to proceed. So, lightly clad and overheated as he was, he sprang upon an outside car, and drove the three miles home in cold, frosty air. He arrived at the house in a chill, but thought more of his ankle; and, after having had the latter steeped and bandaged, went to bed. The ankle soon grew strong, and gave him no more trouble; but the chill had brought on an insidious cold. Of this he took no heed, until it began to assume a most disagreeable form. As the days went on, he felt more and more depressed and out of order, and complained of frequent headaches. Still he persevered in his studies, rose early, went to bed late, read, wrote, and took his usual rapid walks. And if he awoke a little later than he desired, now and then, it was no fault of his own, but of the alarm-clock, which refused to strike; and “Confound the alarm clock,” varied

occasionally by "Confounde y<sup>e</sup> alarum clocke," is a frequent imprecation in his journal of these days.

On Saturday, the 17th, a long walk was taken, and the evening was spent in reading with his two companions, first *Cymbeline*, and, afterwards, again *Sartor Resartus*. On the Sunday following he complained of what he believed to be a bilious headache; and on Monday he writes:—"Rose at 4½. Read hard all the morning. Bilious headache. Read at Dub. Soc. all day. Eyes so stiff that I could not turn them in my head. Came home at 5. Could not read in the evening, I was so ill. Got feet bathed, and a mustard-blister to my neck." The next day he was so ill that he was unable to go out; so lay all day on a sofa; and in the evening became much worse. On Wednesday he felt better, but began to think it prudent to relax his exertions a little. "I think it better not to read any more this week," he writes, "and to adopt the first arrangement in the Table of Regulations for this month. I have got beyond what I originally intended." He was exhorted to see his physician, and set off partly with the intention of doing so; but, on the way, he met his friend B\*\*\*\*\*, turned back with him, and took a long walk, hoping to shake off the illness by his usual remedy of exercise.

The next day, feeling still better, and hoping to improve matters by a good bracing ramble in the

## CHAPTER V. 1860. ÆT. 18—.

Twelve Weeks of Precarious Illness.—Trying Kindnesses.—Mental Pain.—Returning Strength.—Restoration of Intellectual Energy.—Varied Readings.—More Illustrative Extracts from Diary.—An Amusing Incident.—A Comedy written.—Abhorrence of the “Revival” Movement.—Convalescence.—More Poems: “The Dream of Doubt;” “Psyche.”—Sonnets: “Immortal Longings.”—The Athanasian Creed.

**H**IS journal bears record of twelve weary weeks of illness, following that terrible rupture, four of which were passed, as he describes, “sitting in the house disconsolately.” Yet even the four worst were not without intellectual activity and intellectual fruit. He read much—particularly in history and literature; and when he could sit up, and hold the pen with firmness, he revised and copied out his poems written in the preceding year. But such work as this soon exhausted him, and he was obliged to forbear. His sudden and dangerous illness, so utterly unexpected, was a great shock to his fellow-students, many of whom visited him, when he was allowed to see them, and bore messages of sympathy and

encouragement from those who could not come ; and in his journal he gives warm expression to his appreciation of that good-fellowship and kindly intention. Sometimes such interviews, however, were too much for him, and produced an excitement which was succeeded by extreme exhaustion. About ten days after the rupture, he writes—“Feeling myself better, I excited myself in the morning by reading a vast quantity of poetry, and talking ;” and thus he brought on another spitting of blood. But he soon rallied from this second attack, and his naturally vigorous constitution exhibited extraordinary recuperative powers. The great impediment to his recovery was his rapid circulation, with attendant eagerness and excitability. But he strove manfully for self-mastery, and succeeded in attaining a wonderful measure of self-control.

Sometimes the presence of those who were most anxious to benefit him would agitate him to a dangerous degree. Sometimes words of exhortation and advice which were tendered to him by the occasional visitor, grated harshly upon his ears. “C\*\*\*t called to inquire for me,” he writes, “and was admitted to an interview. He spoke about my illness, &c., &c. He also said, ‘It will give you time to think ; it will give you breathing time . . . you may be sure it is for your good.’ I fear I turned away too coldly from him while he made

these well-meant remarks." And again, "H\*\*\*\* called . . . [and] comforted me in a strange way by telling me that disease impaired the memory, and that he supposes I have forgotten a great deal of what I knew."

Each day, however, he seemed to feel himself better, and he bore his imprisonment with admirable patience. The sad motto with which he had headed his Diary during the first few weeks of his illness, as he now began to feel the "rapture of the spring stir within him," and saw the leaves and flowers unfolding, though but slowly, about his windows, was replaced in the third week with the beautiful line from *In Memoriam*—

"Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,  
The little speedwell's darling blue,  
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,  
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,  
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,  
That longs to burst a frozen bud,  
And flood a fresher throat with song."

Only once or twice did any cry of discontent break from him—when he felt, as he was at times reminded, that, in his great debility, the knowledge which he had striven so hard to amass was indeed slipping from his memory. "Just as I was finishing Kingsley's *Westward Ho!*, and was reading Amyas's blindness, in rushed G\*\*\*\*\* with a Latin sentence for me to construe. . . . I was reminded

my fast-failing knowledge, and got very angry . . . and then I finished *Westward Ho!*, and got worse—it ends so sadly ;” and then he tells how he rose, and walked about the room for many minutes, wrestling with dark thoughts and fierce passion and the old perplexing doubts of the year gone by, till at last he had worked off the bitter mood, and felt better as he wrote. The next day he was able to drive out through some of the scenes which he loved so well—“*Sol inter nubila fulget*,” he writes. He was now really convalescent, and five weeks after his first attack (the very same day of the week, as it happened), he recounts joyfully the fact that he has “actually walked” in the open air.

His convalescence was accompanied by a revival of intellectual energy ; and as, in consequence of his inability to walk far and of the necessity of his avoiding harsh winds and showers, he was obliged to spend the greater part of the day within-doors, abundant leisure for reading and invention was at his command. Beckford’s *Italy*, Gray’s Poems, Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered*, the *Tatler*, Herodotus, Whately’s *Logic*, Alison’s *History of Europe*, Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, the *Phædo* of Plato, Cowper’s *Homer*, Keats’s, Collins’s Poems, Milman’s *Fall of Jerusalem*, many plays of Shakespeare, were among the miscellaneous works and authors perused and reperused during the first few weeks of returning strength ; Latin verses were written for exercise ; mathematics

away under cover, and escape. Armstrong happening to come up the mound at that moment, book in hand, the little fellow begged him to hold the cord for a moment or two, and, the request being cheerfully granted, ran down quietly, and just as Curio was about to throw up his lasso, vaulted over the wall and seized the uplifted hand. The "bully," eying his diminutive antagonist with contempt; bade him let go at once; which command being flung back in disdain, he set himself to twist the youngster's arm and wrist like a rope, with most ferocious intention. Armstrong, seeing his young friend's plight, and boiling with rage, transferred the charge of the kite to some one standing near him, and, before an eye could wink, had rushed down the mound, sprung over the wall, seized the "bully" by the throat, and was rolling over him in the thick summer dust, as white as a miller, amid the shouts of astonished sympathizers, and the bewilderment of passers-by. How long they might have rolled over one another in their wild struggle I know not; but, being plucked asunder by the vigorous intervention of two or three stalwart gentlemen, they rose and stood face to face; when Curio, feeling that he had had perhaps enough of it for the present, turned, and moved sulkily away. It was indeed given out that Curio bore a morbid grudge towards his antagonist for some time after, and that he frequently



lay in wait for him, with a pitch-fork and other deadly weapons, at such hours as the latter might be expected to pass his father's gates. But years went on, and the youth developed into manhood, and was now to become the hero of a very different tragedy, being defeated, unhappily, in far gentler lists. But the above-mentioned encounter rendered him an object of interest in his new *rôle* to his former antagonist, whose recollection of him was now all at once revived :—

“ ‘Curio,’ ” announces the Diary, “fell in love with ‘Luria’ (he wears goggles of blue glass, she is the ugliest d——l I ever saw); ‘Curio’ went to ‘Luria’s’ window and performed the balcony-scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, only in his own words; ‘Luria’ was indignant; ‘Curio’ forced ‘Luria’s’ door, and swore his troth on bended knee; ‘Luria’ was inexorable; whereupon ‘Curio’ drank poison, and pierced his side with a stiletto. ‘Curio’ is in danger of death—God bless ‘Curio!’ . . . B\*\*\*,” continues the Diary, “came in the evening, and we had a great laugh.”

This little incident now afforded the invalid considerable amusement, and he set himself to embody the whole story in the form of a comedy; which I mention here because one of its most ludicrous scenes illustrates the opinion he entertained then of the movement known as the “Religious Revival,” which was proceeding at that

moment in the North of Ireland. "Z," he writes, in his journal of the 24th April, "came in the evening: we had a spirited conversation *de rerum naturâ*. He is disposed to look favourably on the 'Revivalism' of the present day; nor am I surprised at this, as he is so much among the pietist portion of the community." The sceptic, in his hour of sickness, had strength enough to ridicule what he always regarded as a monstrous product of human insanity; and the scene in the burlesque in which he derides it, is conceived in a vein of thorough and unmistakable contempt.

But if he mocked such eccentric manifestations with levity, he was far from pursuing his investigations in any such spirit. His mind reverting, in these hours of enforced tranquillity, to the questions which had occupied his attention during the previous two years, the doubts and struggles which had given him so much pain began to assume an imaginative colouring; and several poems of a serious cast were the immediate result. One of the first of these, which he calls a *Dream of Doubt*, describes in figurative form the early misgivings relative to the character of the Deity which had sent him adrift in the "sea of dark negation;" and into the first stanza he introduces four beautiful lines, originally a part of his poem on *Infancy*<sup>1</sup>—a transference not without considerable significance:—

<sup>1</sup> See "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 253.—ED.

"I faint, I swoon—my brow is fanned  
By murmuring breezes, and I seem  
To move in some Lethean land,  
Nor can I feel 't is but a dream—  
A silvery skiff in a flood of gold,  
An Angel hymning by the prow,  
A radiant anadem round his brow,  
A rippling mantle o'er him rolled :

"On either hand an odorous shade  
Of budded larch and lilac-bloom  
Flings o'er the tide a purple gloom,  
Where gold and azure blend and fade :  
The Seraph, o'er me bending low,  
Now cools me with his fluttering wings,  
Now from his lips of ruby flow  
Melodious strains, while viewless strings

"Breathe heavenly music in the skies  
Above us. O'er the waveless blue  
The skiff with gentle motion flies,  
While scenes of beauty rise anew  
For ever on the lovely marge ;  
Here opens many a fragrant isle,  
Here deepens many a dark defile,  
And here the shadowy hills enlarge

"And topple o'er the crystal tide.  
The burning kisses of the Morn  
With blushes of delight adorn  
The breast of Earth, his blooming bride ;  
They trill a harmony of praise,  
That floats on cherub-wings above  
For ever, and their voices raise  
In worship to the GOD OF LOVE. . .

" 'The GOD OF HATE !' the Seraph cries,  
 'The God of hatred and revenge !'  
 And lightning flashes from his eyes,  
 And from his lips, 'Revenge ! Revenge !'  
 Is thundered o'er the darkening main . .  
 The gold has vanished from the tide ;  
 The streamlet is an ocean wide ;  
 And stars amid the darkness wane !

" The storm is roaring through the skies,  
 A demon sits beside the prow  
 And scowls on me with scathèd brow ;  
 The waves in mountain heaps arise,  
 And toss with rage my trembling skiff  
 Whose planks they rive with deafening crash . .  
 I struggle toward yon looming cliff  
 Whose rugged base the billows lash."

This poem was immediately followed by another allegorical piece, entitled *Psyche*,<sup>1</sup> now also printed among his collected poems. The poem *Psyche* figures as in a vision the movements of a mind from the early stage of active inquiry to atheism, from atheism to a system of philosophy which proves hollow and unsatisfactory, and then home to a more exalted Christianity. A student, in the early morning, poring over the *Apology of Socrates*, reminded of his own mental perplexity, sighs for intellectual light ; and then, in bodily weariness, laying his "head upon his hands," drops into an unhealthy slumber. He then in vision perceives a youth, in whose face he traces a strange resemblance to

<sup>1</sup> See "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 282.—ED.

his own features, led into the cavern of Introspection (or Metaphysical Thought). In the *Second Part*, a youth, in whose features the sleeper again recognizes his "own lineaments," has fallen from a precipice over a raging sea, and, in his fall, has grasped an overhanging branch : the precipice is Scepticism, the sea the "godless deep." While the sleeper is suffering terror at the thought that the youth's hold is loosening as his strength gradually fails, the scene changes ; and the interior of a beautiful cathedral unfolds to the view. There a marriage is about to be solemnized, and the sleeper recognizes again his own features in those of the Bridegroom. The Bride is the New Philosophy which is to serve in place of Religion. She is very beautiful to look upon, but, when the ceremony is concluded, she, like Sir Gawain's lady, changes into a mass of loathsome ugliness ; and, as the Bridegroom flies from her in horror, she pursues him with hideous laughter, summoning him to return to the embraces of his "wedded wife." Darkness again veils the sleeper's eyes ; and the last scene opens, displaying an aged warrior kneeling in adoration within a "ruined crypt." Again the sleeper recognizes, in the warrior's face also, his own features, aged and worn ; and, as the old man lifts up his hands towards heaven, he hears the words of prayer rise slowly, embodying a pure and peaceful creed. As a strange unconscious forecast of the course of the

writer's own mental life, this poem, whatever its immaturity of style may be, has for me, at least, a deep and abiding interest.

But he was still far from any formulated religious creed; far indeed from accepting the theological doctrines of any of the Christian sects or churches. A few days later, he records—"Walked through the Necropolis.<sup>1</sup> Came to the conclusion that annihilation is more likely to be the end of man than resurrection, at least according to natural analogy; and wrote in consequence the sonnet, 'Yet how is this?'"—a sonnet which I here transcribe as it appears after a subsequent revision:—

"A world of Death! The milky flower-bell,  
The leaflet dancing on the sapful stem,  
The purple mountain's snowy anadem,  
The glancing rill that babbles through the dell,  
Cease, yielding place to others; but the same  
Green blade or bloom we ne'er again behold;  
New snows efface the hill-top's summer gold;  
New runnels pour their wavelets. Can we claim,  
We only, guerdon of eternal life?  
Perish the doubt! Ask thou thy longing soul,  
Thy beating heart, thy bosom's noble strife  
With sin, thy yearning for a final goal  
Where none shall ever droop, or fail or grieve!  
Hear what they tell of comfort, and believe!"

And the next day, being Sunday, he writes—"Went to Church, and exercised the most praiseworthy self-restraint."

<sup>1</sup> A neighbouring cemetery.—Ed.

Self-restraint indeed was necessary in such a place, at such a moment ; for his note-book shows that, just about the same time, he and the youngest of the little confraternity of unbelievers were exercising themselves by reducing to a mathematical absurdity, by means of algebraic symbols, the Creed of St. Athanasius. *His* creed was indeed without form, and void ; the exhortation to build upon the basis of the "immortal longing" he had described, was itself a confession of wavering ; and the words with which he concludes his journal on the 30th of June, exhibit the utmost point to which he had yet advanced —

"END OF THE FIRST HALF YEAR.

BLESSED BE THE *POWER OF GOOD.*"

## CHAPTER VI. 1860, æt. 18-19.

Continued Convalescence.—Letter II. : *Projected Return to the County Wicklow ; An Idyllic Retreat.*—Letter III. *Description of the "Lowland Paradise" of Wicklow.*—Delightful Saunterings.—Altadore : Dunran.—Poetical Activity.—Letter IV. : *More Description.*—"The Lady's Rock : A Ballad."—Happier Views of Life.—Welcome Change in Character of Poetry.—Letter V. : *Good Accounts of Health ; Courses of Reading.*—On the Mountains again.—A Happy Passage of Life Closed.—"Adieu!"

HIS physical strength now gradually improving, he could take a short walk almost daily when the rain was not falling, or a cold wind blowing. But the weather had been rather against him. "My health improves almost every day," he writes to his uncle on the 12th May ; "but I am still very delicate, as the least breath of sharp wind throws me back. The inclemency of the weather is very much against a speedy recovery ; however, in this respect I suffer in common with invalids in every part of Europe, and even in Egypt—if we believe the article in the *Times* of Tuesday. While I write the rain is pouring down in torrents, shattering the blossoms of the fruit-trees which I view from my window, and creating oceans of sludge on the roadside—*miserabile dictu!* We hardly have a



fine day here in six weeks, and even then the sun hides himself in clouds long before nightfall."

But now the summer was brightening as it advanced, and his physician thought it time the patient should move away somewhere, not far off, for change of air. The dear old County Wicklow was the first place in his thoughts, and a pleasant retired spot being chosen there, he writes gaily in anticipation of the move :—

LETTER II. (*To the Rev. J. E. Armstrong, D.D.*)—"July 7, 1860. . . Summer has at last thought fit to make his appearance in this 'ultimate dim Thule,' and is emptying his golden horn on hill and dale. Mr Punch's theory, therefore, about the Zodiacal signs has proved fallacious ; at least the celestial tinkers have 'executed their repairs with great expedition,' as the handbills have it. The Doctor has ordered me change of air ; he will not, however, allow me to cross the Channel, so I regret there is no prospect of my seeing you this summer. We have fixed upon a spot situated in the most luxuriant region of the County Wicklow . . . The surrounding scenery is exquisite, embracing within a [radius] of some ten or twelve miles the Glen-o'-the-Downs, the Devil's Glen, the Seven Churches, &c.—Yours, E. J. ARMSTRONG."

In his Diary he marks the day of his removal with a picture of a rose in full bloom, to signify that it was a day of exquisite happiness to him ;

and the following is his description of the delightful region in which he rested, written in the August following :—

LETTER III. (*To the Rev. J. E. Armstrong, D.D.*)—"Our present lodging is situate on the outskirts of a hamlet embosomed in a retired vale, in the midst of the loveliest and the richest country in Wicklow. The Glen-of-the-Downs, the Devil's Glen, the Seven Churches, the Vale of Ovoca, Loughs Dan, Tay, and Breagh, and other celebrated spots, are in our vicinity. Before the house rises a gentle slope, the summit of which commands one of the finest prospects I have ever beheld—farm-houses, granges, and lordly mansions, embosomed in gloomy groves of oak and fir, interspersed amid new-mown meadows and fields of ripening grain; undulating pasture, 'browsed by deep-uddered kine,' and dreary levels diversified by mottled folds and clumps of dark-green woodlands; hamlets and villages, whitening in the sun, partly over-arched by copses, partly concealed from the eye by lichened crags and velvet-swarded hillocks. In the east stretches a wide expanse of sea,—its surface varied with many hues, from the deep blue of the sapphire to the greenest tint of the emerald, and its coast girt with silvery breakers glittering like a cestus, from the reefs at the foot of Bray Head to the southernmost promontory in the landscape—which lies in placid repose upon its own

purple shadow in the waters. When the sky is obscured by an under-roof of sliding cloud, and the sun casts his beams on the middle Channel, we can obtain a distant view of the more conspicuous of the Welsh mountains. On the other hand, whenever the weather is blue and unclouded on this side of the Channel, no view can be had ; just as at panoramic exhibitions, the effect of the transparencies is intensified by darkening the room in which the spectators are assembled, and *vice versâ*. In the background loom the gold-green tops of hills, jagged with pine and robed with heather and fern ; while, above these hills, tower the naked heads of our loftiest mountains, wrinkled all over with chasm and cleft, and patched here and there with purple heath. There is more of the softness and rich tone peculiarly characteristic of the English landscape here than in any other part of Ireland, I am told. Yet the blustering westerly breezes, the occasional thatched cabin, the narrow field, and the tattered mendicant, will not suffer one to forget that he is only in poor Paddyland all the while . . .—Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

His residence in this beautiful district was spent in quiet walks, and drives to distant spots to which he had thought little of walking thirty miles of a day, when he was robust and hale, just to spend an hour in gazing at them ; but chiefly in strolling

about, when the weather was fine, along the country by-ways, then fragrant with honeysuckles ; among the new-mown meadows and the ripening corn-fields ; in old and well-kept demesnes, through their long shady avenues of beeches and lordly limes ; or in the woody ravine of Altadore, in the mountain-side, dark as night with the shadows of its yews and beeches—"a place to invoke the devil in," as he used to say ; through which a headlong mountain-stream plunges in cascade after cascade with perpetual roar—

"Where the torrent, loud as thunder,  
Tumbles into a cleft of gloom."<sup>1</sup>

And the cheering and soothing effect of the scenery, and of his unavoidable leisure and repose, was very soon apparent in the look of health upon his face, and, again, in the changed character of the poems which now flowed from his pen.

A day spent in the wild and solitary glen of Dunran, with its quaint rock, oak-woods, black tarn, and winding level sward, suggested to him the fairy ballad of *The Ladye's Rock*, which has found its way into the affections of many readers—*suggested*, for the region in which the events of the ballad take place is an ideal region, the name and a few of its features only being derived from the glen, as the following letter explains :—

<sup>1</sup> "Allan's Song" in "Ovoca."—ED.

LETTER IV. (*To G. B.*)—"July 20, 1860. . . .  
 . . . To-day we drove in a jaunting-car to the demesne  
 and glen of Dunran . . . The sky was overcast with  
 heavy clouds, occasionally pierced by sickly sun-  
 beams; and over the dark mountain-tops a steel-  
 blue exhalation hung from time to time. Never-  
 theless the weather continued fine till sundown,  
 although every moment we expected rain. Our  
 way lay through the midst of the richest country I  
 have ever seen . . . The glen of Dunran is chiefly  
 remarkable for a curious isolated crag, called The  
 Ladye's Rock, toppling over the larches and pines  
 that belt the hill-side, and mirrored in a dark tarn  
 that sleeps at its feet. I am not acquainted with  
 any legend attached to this rock; but I intend to  
 invent one, and embody it in a ballad to-night, unless  
 I become gloomy, as usual, and resort to Plato to  
 dispel my melancholy. I am now going to the de-  
 mesne of —, where I shall be able to chew the  
 cud of sweet and bitter thoughts undisturbed."

That evening, as it appears, he did console him-  
 self by reading the *Phædo*; but the next day was  
 produced *The Ladye's Rock: A Ballad*, somewhat  
 to his own satisfaction, and to the delight of one  
 or two to whom he read it. "July 20," says his  
 Diary: "Wrote *The Ladye's Rock: A Ballad*.  
 Rather like it. New style for me; absence of  
 metaphysics or esoteric meaning. Shows a change  
 in my mode of looking upon the world, for which

I thank the Supreme Demiurgus."—Yet it was not altogether a "new" style ; rather a reversion to the simpler, healthier tone of the poems of childhood, with which he had begun so long before, to "wreath the hill and wold ;" but indicating a change indeed in his "mode of looking upon the world"—a happy resurrection from the gloom of Tophet.

On the 1st January of this year, he had turned over to the leaf of his Diary for the 23rd July, and had written on it—"My nineteenth birthday. I wonder if I shall ever reach it." On the 1st May following, being then just emerging from the most dangerous period of his illness, he wrote in the words—"It would not be surprising if I did not." Here was now the 23rd of July. It found him shattered indeed in health, with all his prospects changed : but not cast down ; happy in the main, and still full of bright hope, with even a wider and more splendid ambition, and with unabated energy of mind. One poem after another was now produced, all marked by much calmness and tranquillity of mood, all elaborated beyond his wont hitherto, the form and the music being more respected than passion or breadth of design. Indeed he carefully abstained from the consideration of themes which were likely to disturb his studied mental calm, and nursed the more soothing thoughts and gentler emotions, knowing well that therein lay the antidote

against the hurt which threatened him. Towards the close of his happy sojourn in the neighbourhood which had grown so dear to him he described, in somewhat cold terms and with cautious moderation, his hopes and aims :—

LETTER V. (*To The Rev. J. E. Armstrong, D.D.*)—"August, 1860. . . . I am happy to be able to inform you that my restoration to health is rapidly progressing under the influence of the fine air of Wicklow. My studies are, I am sorry to say, advancing languidly enough, much more so than I could wish under more favourable circumstances. English Literature, Logic, Metaphysics, but chiefly Platonic Dialectics, form at present my only intellectual pursuits ; yet I hope, with time and perseverance, to succeed in attaining the object to which my wishes converge,—namely, a finished education ; although I am far from believing such to be the *summum bonum* of existence. Yet it is my duty, if it were only as an example to \*\*\*\*\*, to direct my energies to this end . . . Of course, we must expect many unforeseen dangers and difficulties in [duty's] precipitous path ; but let it be remembered that, in the words of the dying Socrates, ' the prize is high, the hope is great. . . . '—Your affectionate nephew, E. J. A."

His walks were now gradually lengthened ; the old adventurous spirit began to reassert itself as his bodily strength increased ; and at last, contrary to

all medical injunctions, and the entreaties of over-anxious relatives, he succeeded one day in climbing to the top of the highest mountain in the neighbourhood, sniffed the delicious mountain-breezes once again, and descended with feelings of joyous satisfaction and unbounded hope.

It was one of the happiest passages of his life, this period of convalescence in that lovely mountain-land; and when the day came when he was to turn his face homeward, he felt unqualified sadness. It was then that he wrote his little poem *Adieu!*,<sup>1</sup> which was read aloud, with solemn ceremony, high up the side of a ferny mountain overlooking "the lowland paradise of grove and lawn;" and then hands were waved to bid farewell, and he and his companion descended the hill disconsolately and slow.

<sup>1</sup> See "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 313.—ED.



CHAPTER VII. 1860, ÆT. 19—.

"A Baphometric Fire-Escape."—New Attitude towards Christianity.—Renewed Work.—Approach of Winter.—More Illustrative Extracts from Diary.—Ordered to leave Ireland.—Letter VI. : *A Defence of Opinions*.—Resolves to winter in Jersey.—Early Poems burnt.—Journey through England.—First Glimpse of the Channel Islands.—Arrival in Jersey.

ON his return home from Wicklow, that autumn, he began to read with something of his former sedulity, and wrote frequently as the mood frequently recurred; and his mind soon found itself face to face with the old vexing problems, from which for a time he had held resolutely aloof. One raw and cold Sunday, too bitter for him to venture out, he sat down, as his Diary records, to write an essay on "*The Credibility of the Christian Religion*." His feeling was antagonistic, and his purpose was chiefly, perhaps, to systematize and formulate his opinions. The result was unexpected; and, as the essay is virtually a passage of autobiography, I transcribe some extracts from it here, as they appear in his notebook, under a title suggested by *Sartor Resartus*—

**“ A BAPHOMETIC FIRE-ESCAPE.**

“ The principal evidences in favour of the truth of Christianity may be comprised under the following heads :—Change produced by Christianity on its introduction ; obstacles to the spread of Christianity ; the ancient prophecies ; miracles, wonders, and signs ; internal evidences ; good effects of Christianity ; modern Jews.<sup>1</sup>—I shall state briefly my present views and convictions under these heads in their respective order.

“ *Change produced by Christianity on its introduction.*—All men will agree that a vast improvement in the general moral condition of a large section of mankind has taken place gradually since the introduction of Christianity. Few will be found to deny that this improvement is in *great measure* traceable to the adoption of the Christian religion ; while but the bigoted and prejudiced will assert that the establishment of Christianity has been the sole unaided cause of the present higher standard of morality. Much must be attributed to the advance of civilization, the progressive element in the human character, the diffusion of knowledge, the refinement in manners and customs which increases simultaneously with the growth of separate and individual

<sup>1</sup> Whately's “ Introductory Lessons on the Christian Evidences.”—E. J. A.

nations, and many other causes too numerous to mention. But it has been urged that in proportion as Christianity was diffused throughout the Roman Empire, a renovation of morals became apparent. Yet it should be remembered that the Roman Empire at the period of the introduction of Christianity was confirmed in its old age, and displayed indubitable symptoms of approaching dissolution ; that at no epoch of its history did such gross immorality prevail ; and that a reaction was naturally to be expected under *any* system in which good principles were inculcated and a higher tone of morality enforced. The world was sick at heart, and Rome was the heart of the world. Contrast the moral condition of the Romans in the age of Regulus with that which existed under Caligula and Nero ! In the golden age of Rome, morals were at a far higher standard than in the days of her decrepitude and senility, when it was next to impossible to descend any lower in the scale of debasement and impurity. A reaction, I repeat, was inevitable at a time when an emperor could set fire to the metropolis of the world for the sake of a few hours' amusement, and when every species of barbarity that could be conceived was openly practised with impunity throughout the several gradations of society. The change for the better was, moreover, extremely gradual. Several centuries rolled past before the principles of Christianity gained firm

must occur to every candid thinker that among the many thousands who hold the Christian doctrine, *few* indeed have looked for 'strong evidence,' and *fewer* for *any* evidence whatsoever, of its truth. Indeed, if I mistake not, the Archbishop himself has implied, if not asserted, this fact in the conclusion to his work on the Evidences of Christianity. How many entertain and cherish the hopes held forth in the Christian system, and yet are wholly incompetent to give any 'reason for the hope that is in them !' How many truly religious persons, of a cautious and trustful temperament, are known to shrink instinctively, so to speak, from an investigation of the grounds of their faith, on the alleged plea that they would incur the penalties consequent on impiety by pursuing such a course ! And if it be so in the case of enlightened men of this nineteenth century, how much more so in the case of the unenlightened and superstitious converts to early Christianity, to whom the new religion was presented surrounded with a halo of novelty, and rendered attractive by the promise of an intellectual emancipation ! Again, do not the Christian missionaries succeed in obtaining numerous converts to their faith, and have they not always succeeded in doing so, without being 'able to produce strong evidence of its truth ?' Do they not, in reality, obtain their object, by communicating the doctrines of Christianity through the medium of emotion and imagination, rather than through

that of reason and historical inquiry? Again, any well-informed person must be acquainted with the fact that many religions have arisen under the most inauspicious circumstances, and have, notwithstanding, gradually obtained wide-spread influence. As to the assertion that Mohammedanism was propagated by the sword (in which I acquiesce with certain limitations), I think Mr. Carlyle has very justly observed that Mohammed must needs have succeeded first in obtaining the sword, before he could wield it for the propagation of his religion. Mohammed had to persuade a large body of men that his was a divine mission, before he could set out in a career of conquest and victory. But in proportion as Christianity presented a purer system of morals and enforced a less strict discipline than Mohammedanism, so it was most likely to become popular by the simpler means of preaching and teaching. It cannot be denied that the fastings, &c., incumbent on the professors of Islam, form more than a counterpoise to the sensualities and indulgences permitted by that creed.

"*Prophecies*.—I am unable to answer the argument of Faber<sup>1</sup> in regard to 'actually accomplished' prophecy. The vaticination selected by Faber, *argumenti gratiâ*, is that delivered by Moses to the Israelites on the eve of their entry into Palestine, respecting the future destinies and fortunes of that

<sup>1</sup> "The Difficulties of Infidelity." By George Stanley Faber, B.D. (Ed. 1833).—ED.

extraordinary people. This prediction, delivered at the distance of fifteen centuries before the commencement of its fulfilment, contains a minute account of the events and circumstances predicted, in no less than seventeen distinct particulars, to the full and accurate accomplishment of ends of which the unanimous voice of history and other writings bears testimony. The belief that this fulfilment took place accidentally, involves, as Mr. Faber argues, a far greater degree of credulity than the admission that it was the effect of divine interposition. And so of many others, though not of all prophecies, recorded in Holy Writ ; we may attempt to explain them away by the theory of accidental coincidence, but a candid reasoner must of necessity be struck with the contrast presented by the *definite complicacy* of a vast majority of Scriptural prophecies, and the *indefinite simplicity* of *all* predictions (and there are but few) to be met with in the writings of professedly uninspired authors. . . .

“Such being my views, I must admit (for the present) the cogency of the argument adduced in favour of Christianity which is based upon the ancient prophecies ; withholding at the same time my acquiescence in the assertion that obscure and ambiguous predictions have any positive claims whatever to our implicit belief, from the fact that various and conflicting interpretations have been from time to time adapted to such prophecies.

which cannot all be true, and which all possess a greater or less degree of plausability.

“*Miracles*.—As I am unable to answer the arguments of Paley, Leslie, and Faber on this point, I must (for the present) accept without reservation the accounts given in the works of the Evangelists, notwithstanding the difficulties with which such a belief is attended. The case stands thus, when reduced to a syllogism :—

“ ‘A fact is established by the highest possible degree of moral evidence :

“ ‘But certain difficulties may be started :

“ ‘Therefore the fact must not be credited.’<sup>1</sup>

“Let us apply this form of argument to some historical occurrence, and observe the issue :—

“The fact of the existence of Cyrus is established by such strong moral evidence, that, if we reject it, we must reject all history, and sink into universal scepticism :

“But with respect to this fact a serious difficulty occurs; Herodotus and Xenophon give us two accounts of Cyrus so essentially different that by no human ingenuity can they be reconciled together :

“Therefore no such person as Cyrus ever existed.”

“And to such an argument as this, whether applied to Cyrus or the Christian miracles, I deliberately and irrevocably subscribe my dissent . . .

<sup>1</sup> Faber.—E. J. A.      <sup>2</sup> Abridged from Faber.—E. J. A.

“I shall not at present pursue this subject any further . . . . For my own future warning, I hereby declare that I sat down with the intention of confuting the arguments for the truth of Christianity. . . . That I have succeeded in producing an effect diametrically opposite to that which I intended, is to be ascribed to the fact that I have never investigated the arguments *for*, but contented myself with finding out arguments *against*, the truth of ‘revelation ;’ and so my attention has been diverted from the contemplation of objective truth by an undue regard to captious and frivolous objections.—*Sunday, September, 9, 1860.*”

These observations, written down in pencil, must not be regarded as anything more than the expression of a train of thought hastily embodied in words—a chapter in what he entitled his “Psychological Record,” and, as such, as I have said, a necessary portion of this Memoir. What they led to was hardly more than a suspension of judgment, a diminution of self-confidence, a transient feeling of alarm at the possibility of the truth of the whole concatenation of doctrines embraced in the dogmas of the reformed Christian churches ; and a more attentive and more candid study of the arguments of the defenders of the Christian religion. They must here be regarded simply as an overheard soliloquy. He was thankful, however, for the new mood ; and hastened next morning to communicate the impres-



sions to his friend B\*\*\*\*\*, with whom he took a walk, and discussed the matter, says the Diary, "for hours ;" following up the discussion in the evening by reading Leslie's *Short and Easy Method with the Deists* ; and, next morning, after his usual studies in French and German, he was off again to walk, and talk the evidences over ; and again the day following he writes that he walked with the same friend "into town, reading Faber, and commenting on it as we went, regardless of the passers-by."

The change of the year, the fall of the leaf, were to him the heralds of danger. It was not long before the good work of the mountain-air seemed all but undone. Perhaps, also, the conscious possession of health, and the delight in the exercise of recovered powers, led him to undertake too much. Soon he found there was no help for it, he should be obliged, at least for a time, to quit the University, and abandon all his plans connected with it. Even then, however, at the invitation of his old schoolmaster, he took a class in Latin and Greek, in the latter's school, which entailed an almost daily attendance in all states of health and weather, and much talking—very injurious to one whose lung had been so cruelly hurt so short a time before. But he believed he was performing a duty ; and his will was not to be gainsaid.

"Eheu, winter's coming !" he writes—" *Mem.* Equinoctial gales blowing hard"—as if with a

shudder at the thought of the bitter blasts which he had to face outside. But still he went daily to instruct his class, and still he read German and French, and regaled himself with English and other poetry, filling his journal with playful interjectional comments, such as these :—

“*Sept. 26.*—Read Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in his Humour*; Carlyle’s *Miscellanies*—Goethe’s ‘*Märchen aller Märchen*,’ the Tale of Tales which is Goethe’s. . . . . *Sept. 28.*—Read Ben Jonson and Ariosto. Read Ben Jonson—*The Poetaster*. . . . *Oct. 1.*—Read Ben Jonson. Read the *Sorrows of Werther*. How people could have been induced to commit suicide by the perusal of this work is more than I can satisfactorily explain. . . . Werther was radically wrong-hearted. . . . . *Oct. 3.*—Read part of Goethe’s *Faust*—100th time or so (hyperbole!) . . . *Oct. 4.*—Read Goethe’s *Torquato Tasso* (the third time these three years). . . . *Oct. 5.*—Read Goethe’s *Torquato Tasso*. . . . *Oct. 6.*—Finished *Torquato Tasso*. Read *The Robbers*. I am almost intoxicated with delight at having discovered for myself this pearl of literature. . . . *Oct. 7.*—Read most of *The Robbers* a second time with G\*\*\*\*. Began the *Ghost-Seer*. . . . *Oct. 8.*—Finished the *Ghost-Seer*. Æsthetic tea with L\*\*\*\* and A\*\*\*\*. Read [to them] *The Destinies* &c.,<sup>1</sup> *The Knight’s*

<sup>1</sup> The “*Destinies*” was a prophetic sketch setting forth the probable destinies of each individual of his group of intellec-

*Tomb, The Oysterman,*<sup>1</sup> and [various poems] . . . . .

tual friends. Many of its predictions have been since verified, if not in the letter, at least very vividly in the spirit. A few torn pages of it remain, and their contents appear among his "Essays and Sketches," under the title of "A Prophecy."—  
ED.

<sup>1</sup> This is the production referred to—

# THE OYSTERMAN :

## A LYRICAL MONOLOGUE.

*Motto*—"Fish are we that love the mud,  
Rising to no fancy-flies."—*Tennyson*.

### I.

#### *Recitative.*

I trudge  
Through sludge  
And slough,  
By night, with a sweating brow,  
And while I whine, the oyster-brine  
Pours down my back, I trow—  
A flood of brine,  
Like the River Rhine,  
By scrag and scruff doth flow !

#### *Aria.*



Fine oy . . sters !

### II.

I bawl,  
I squall,  
All night,  
By glimmering gas-lamp-light,  
And, as I bawl, to rise and fall,  
The oyster-mouths delight ;  
They rise and fall,

Oct. 9.—Read the *Sport of Destiny, Love and Intrigue*. Began *Fiesco*. *Love and Intrigue* is an enchanting work. Few characters have been so well presented as that of Ferdinand Von Walter in this

Both great and small—  
*They cannot 'scape their plight !*  
 Fine oysters !

## III.

My jaws  
 Have cause  
     To lock,  
 Then to gape with a thunder-shock,  
 Like an oyster dead, when the ghost has fled,  
 And the shell grows fixed as a rock,  
 An oyster bred  
 In an oyster-bed,  
 Now stiff as a stone or a stock !  
 Fine oysters !

## IV.

I hate  
 The weight  
     That weighs  
 Upon my back always ;  
 My coat is torn, and my boots are worn,  
 And the oyster-trade not pays ;  
 My coat is torn,  
 And I 'm all forlorn,  
 And 't was so all my days !  
 Fine oysters !

## V.

Again  
 The rain  
     Descends ;  
 And my tattered coat never defends

drama. The varied phases of passion have been admirably delineated. . . . *Oct. 10.*—Read Schiller's *Fiesco*. Gorgeous! I think the action is more natural, and the passions displayed more attractive,

My body from cold, because it is old ;  
And my bony back earthward bends  
Beneath the cold—  
But soon in the mould  
I'll be laid, with the rats for my friends.  
Fine oysters !

VI.

The sleet  
Doth beat  
My pate,  
My scalp, my shanks, my crate ;  
My soles and heels, like bottomless creels,  
Uptrip me in my gait.  
I go on wheels  
To get my meals—  
Heigh-ho !—*but 't is my fate !*  
Fine oysters !

VII.

The end,  
My friend,  
Of all  
On Earth's terraqueous ball  
Is cark and toil, and ruth and moil,  
Then coffin, bier, and pall !  
' This mortal coil '  
Is twined with toil  
And misery all in all.  
Fine oysters !

if less intense, than in *The Robbers*. Read Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*. It is strikingly in contrast with his other works. . . . Oct. 11.—Read Schiller's *Demetrius*. . . . Oct. 13.—Read Goethe's *Egmont*, and Madame de Staël's critique."

The bitter weather now began to try him sorely; and at last his physician announced that he must winter out of Ireland; the south of France, the south of England would serve; but out of Ireland he should go—out of the raw, damp atmosphere, and out of the way of the temptations to emulation in the race of knowledge. He longed to leave Ireland and travel all the world over. But the uncertainty of the future which this advice implied was very painful, and his going was surrounded with difficulties. "My dear uncle," he writes on the 17th October—"the utterance of a few words this day has completely disarranged all my plans and dimmed my prospects. The Doctor orders me to spend the ensuing winter either in Spain; in Italy; in the south of France; or even in the south of England. . . . I hope all will yet be well, if I attend to the Doctor's advice, and take care of myself for the winter." The reply to which called forth another letter, which still further betrays his depression, while he defends himself against a somewhat galling imputation of restlessness and precipitancy:—

LETTER VI. (*To the Rev. J. E. Armstrong, D.D.*)

—"October 23, 1860. . . . I shall ever remember with a feeling of deep gratitude the tender and fatherly anxiety for my temporal and spiritual welfare displayed by you in your last letter. I am indeed very sorry that I have caused you so much concern by my haste in writing to you so immediately after the Doctor had advised me (virtually) to 'go to Hong Kong.' But really, my dear uncle, the unexpected suddenness of the announcement had an effect upon my mind somewhat similar to that produced upon Goethe's simple citizen of Brussels, on the arrival of the Duke of Alva—'It seemed to me as though the heavens were covered with black crape, which hung so low that one must needs stoop down to avoid knocking one's head against it.' Every time I reperuse your letter, I see more and more the wisdom of your advice; and my heart warmly responds to your acknowledgment that my ambition to excel was *not* altogether a selfish and egotistical ambition. But, my dear uncle, you misapprehend the real nature of my views, when you think (as you appear to do) that in my heart of hearts I resisted Doctor W\*\*\*\*'s kind words, on the occasion when we met at his house. I saw then, as clearly as I see now, that a life of *hard* reading is not the kind of life destined for *me*. But the Doctor's advice—if you remember—assumed the form of an argument

<sup>1</sup> Jetter in "Egmont" (Act iv. Scene 1).—ED.

against the general utility of knowledge, and to such an argument I felt compelled by the spirit of truth to reply as I did. . . . —Your affectionate nephew,  
E. J. ARMSTRONG."

He then communicates a decision, already arrived at, that he should spend the winter in the island of Jersey, in which he happened to have friends and relatives, and of the climate and beauty of which he had formed a high conception, both from hearsay and from accounts which he had been reading. The Island had the great advantage of being within easy distance, and he was not strong enough to endure a long journey. "The climate of these isles," he adds, "is mild and salubrious, the orange flowers there in the winter, and the warm valleys are adorned with the grape, the geranium, the Guernsey-lily, and other plants which are exotics here. The temperature (I have Baron Humboldt's authority for it) is a mean between that of Toulon and that of the south of England ; and frost and snow are exceedingly rare."

Accordingly, his mind being made up, he was straightway busy amassing all possible information. topographical, antiquarian, literary, historical, about the districts of England through which he proposed to pass on his way ; "collecting," as he writes, "a vast quantity of notes on Bath, Bristol, and the Western Counties ;" and writing a "full account of Monmouth's invasion, from Lord Macaulay."



Before taking leave of Ireland, he performed the first act of a work of demolition completed about a year later. On the 7th of November he writes—“I burned some odiously bad poems, written in 1858—*Εσπερα* ; *Castle Kevin* ; *The Dargle, Part I.* ; *On the words ‘Merces profundo, pulcrior. evenit ;’* ‘*My Home is in the Mountain Glen ;*’ *Hell* [title of demoniacal sound !—ED.] &c., &c.” And on the Friday following he went one stage further, for he walked over to the house of his friend B\*\*\*\*\*, and “burned in his presence,” he writes, “the volume of poems . . . composed in 1858-59.”

On the 20th of the same month he left Ireland, with many agreeable anticipations, mingled with some forebodings which were dark enough ; attended, as was found necessary, by some members of his family ; for his state of health was considered much too precarious to admit of his being sent away alone, as was at first intended. He was happy in some respects, for it seemed like the beginning of a series of travels ; and he longed to be strong and active once more, and, if possible, roam away through foreign lands, and see the mountains and the cities of which he had so long dreamed : sad, because, as I have said, the future was vague and uncertain, and his direct course upwards had been too suddenly and painfully interrupted. His passage to Bristol was tempestuous. In the morning it was found that he was the only passen-

ger on board who had escaped sickness. On his arrival at Bristol, weak as he was, he was all eagerness for sight-seeing and exploration. When, next day, his companions and he had driven to the Railway Terminus, he broke away, with scarcely a word of notice, and, despite his weakness and the great danger of over-exertion, hurried to St. Mary's Redcliffe to gaze at the beautiful architecture, and recall the memory of Chatterton; went all through the old church; and returned in triumph, to find his friends in a state of painful anxiety about him, and the train on the point of starting. Bath, and all the country between that city and Weymouth, delighted his eye and his imagination; and so did his sail across the Channel, the weather all the time being calm, and warm, and sunny; and the view off Guernsey, of the isles of Guernsey, Sark, Jethou, Herm, and the distant coast of Jersey, was as beautiful, in the sunlight of the November evening, as aught that ever poet dreamed. On his arrival at St. Helier, he was met and welcomed by one of his earliest school-companions. He walked ashore weak and exhausted, and seemed to the eyes of his old friend the shadow of himself. But in a few days he was out and away, exploring, with glad anticipation, the beautiful by-ways of the little Island, and seeking points of advantage for the fairest and loveliest views, for future calm enjoyment.

CHAPTER VIII. 1860-1861, ÆT. 19—.

Letter VII.: *Good Accounts of Health*.—Happy Surroundings.—Extracts from Journal of 1861.—Prayer to the “Unknown God.”—More Mental Turmoil.—Amateur Song-singing denounced.—Tribute to C. H\*\*\*\*\*.—Pleasant Strolls and Reveries.—Studies in Comparative Theology.—Journal.—A French Roman Catholic Chapel, and “Bible Christianity.”—“Worship of the God of Nature in Nature.”—Solitary Walks.—“Vanity of Vanities.”—An Imaginary “Diabolater.”—Draft Prayer to the Supreme Prometheus.—Dismal Reflections.—A Well-meaning Correspondent.—Letter VIII.: *Inquiry into Writer’s Religious Opinions Discouraged; an Ideal Picture of Jersey; the Universal Spirit*.—“Faust” again.—Journal.—Occupations described.—Graveyard Disputations.—A Beautiful Sunset.

HIS landing in Jersey was the commencement of a joyous and a fruitful period, and he was soon able to write most cheerful news to England:—

LETTER VII. (*To the Rev. J. E. Armstrong, D.D.*)—“Dec. 21, 1860. . . . I am happy and thankful to be able to give you good accounts of my health, which I could not have done had I written a few weeks sooner. What with fruit diet, open-air exercise, change of scene, freedom from book-lore and the society of bookmen, I am rapidly becoming

quite strong, comparatively . . . One great advantage obtained by our removal here is this: our lodgings, which are warm and comfortable in every respect, are situated at the base of a well-wooded cliff, which completely shelters me from the easterly and north-easterly winds, the violence of which, moreover, is greatly modified by the proximity of the Island to the forest-clad shores of Normandy, quite visible to the naked eye on clear days . . . —E. J. A.”

He was now in the enjoyment of perfect leisure, and subjected to the most tranquillizing influences; and, for six or seven months, his time was spent in sauntering and dreaming in fairy scenes,—the little wooded valleys, the fragrant orchards, the bays with their smooth sands and cavernous granite cliffs; and over the gentle hills, each one revealing some delightful, unexpected peep of the neighbouring isles and coasts; sometimes alone, with a book; sometimes with a single companion, conversing on many congenial themes; gathering the snowdrops, the lenten-lilies, the primroses and violets, according to their seasons; inhaling the perfumes of the pink apple-blossoms, or of the cider from the press, in the old Norman farm-yards; or watching the quiet, soft faces, the large mild eyes, of the sleek cows tethered in the deep luxuriant grasses; sometimes riding with warm-hearted friends for a day of pleasure here or

there ; sometimes surrounded by merry and fair young faces, not ever to be forgotten—a happy and a wholesome time, though not wholly unchequered ; which his own Journal will best describe :—

“*Jan.* 1, 1861.—New Year’s Day. Anno Mundi, x. Julian Period, 6574. Jewish Era, 5621-2. Mohammedan Era, 1278. 1861, A. C.—Last night a tempest swept the Channel from the south-west, bending and cracking the naked branches of the withered trees, and bearing along with it driving rain and slanting hail. The moon glimmered fitfully upon my window, as I lay tossing upon a restless couch, brooding over pleasing and painful memories of the expiring year, and vainly endeavouring to lay the ghostly visions of the future that ever and anon haunted my mind. The storm howled and whistled over the tiled roofs and lofty chimneys of the surrounding houses. Hour after hour the clocks of the town tolled forth with marvellous and startling clearness, and occasionally their solemn notes shivered and shuddered, vibrating in the blast. Suddenly, one after one, the booming bells, in twelve mournful clangs, announced to the lonely night-watcher the departure of the old year, and the commencement of the new. A thrill of deep melancholy passed through me. I poured forth a passionate prayer to the Unknown God for help and guidance in the cycle of months I had entered ; and my prayer was

when I glanced at the modern village, clustering at the base of the Mont, and set off by a handsome and convenient harbour, the resort of the oyster-fishery fleet in time of storm!"

Taking it into his head to observe and compare the forms, ceremonies, and modes of worship of the various sects, and the temperaments and appearances of their devotees—from which study he had some faint hope of obtaining a little fresh light on the religious question—he now availed himself of the singular facilities which were afforded for this purpose by the little town of St. Helier, where the churches and conventicles of the multitudinous religious bodies are grouped together in as convenient proximity as statues in a pantheon, or the side-chapels of St. Peter's. That the result was not always edifying will appear from the next extract from his Journal:—

"*January 6, 1861 (Epiphany Sunday).*—Went to the French Roman Catholic Chapel this morning, and attended the celebration of the Mass. The singing was execrable; a fat, stumpy man, in blouse and belt, with a red muffler of some coarse stuff wrapped loosely round a neck which would not have misbecome Alcides—a man resembling a gigantic codfish standing on its caudal fins—led off the chanting. The officiating priest wore an emblazoned alb and surplice, which reminded one of chintz bed-curtains. He preached a sermon on the passage of *St. Joseph*

et *St.-Marie dans le desert*, very touching, very effective. But, on the whole, I must say that the mimetic and choral parts of the performance were of the vilest description, and not at all what I should have expected in a French Chapelle Catholique. Immediately on the conclusion of the Sacrifice of the Mass we plunged into the labyrinthine intricacies of the dingy back-streets, and emerged in a chapel belonging to the 'Bible Christians,' small, but very neat and scrupulously clean. In the towering pulpit a Bible Christian—black hair steeped in oil (like Aaron's beard redolent of ointment), sallow complexion, diamonded with the sweat-drops of Bible Christian zeal; screw mouth, occasionally relaxing into a crooked smile of Bible Christian pity, or perhaps sympathy, for the perishing souls of those who are not Christians, and, especially, who are not Bible Christians; black dress-coat and black vest; height, middle, but sufficient for a Bible Christian pastor (for Bible Christianity is quite distinct from vascular). . . . behold a rough portrait of the Bible Christian, who was pouring forth streams of turbid oratory when we entered the small, neat, and scrupulously clean chapel of the Bible Christians in St. Helier. The place was the reverse of what Ovid would have been pleased to term *suaveolens*. The Bible Christian thunderer alluded more than once to the 'perfume of Christianity' (of course 'Bible'), 'the perfume of religion,' and the 'per-

sume of the Holy Spirit.' The contrast being to us irresistible, and at the same time ludicrous to a degree, we looked at each other, looked at the Bible Christian, and burst out laughing. Hereupon the whole congregation of Bible Christians turned round, with Bible Christian horror depicted in their countenances. Whereat the Bible Christian pre-eminent . . . launched forth with vehemence on the 'awful wickedness' of the enemies of Bible Christianity; and, after having prophesied that a day would arrive when the Bible Christians should 'advance to the victory, like an army of martyrs marching with tear-fraught banners,' roared 'Amen!' like ten bulls of Bashan with sore throats, and gave out a Bible Christian hymn, slamming over the verses with a Bible Christian disregard for the laws of rhythm and metre. Instantly a querulous clarionet and a squeaking flute 'from above' piped a hobbling hymn-tune; the Bible Christians growled or screamed, according to the calibres of their several voices. . . . It was too much; we absolutely yelled with laughter, and beat a precipitate retreat."

But the next day's record shows that if he was unable to witness such a scene as this with becoming gravity, the spirit of reverence was not dead. Nay, it was because that spirit was deep and strong, and his perception of the world and its mystery was vivid and sublime, that the puny efforts of shallow and self-confident minds to



smother the voice of honest inquiry with Brummagem dogmas excited his amusement, indignation, or regret :—

*“January 7, 1861.—Walked to St. Brelade’s Bay, paused on the verge of a cliff, gazed, and were enraptured. We then crossed Noirmont Point; lay in the heather which clothes the wold overlooking Noirmont Manor, with its beeches, oaks, and evergreens dipping in the calm blue deep; the Bay of St. Aubin lying before us like [the picture of] an Italian lake, glassy and azure; Elizabeth Castle rising, with proud bastions and glittering roofs, in the midst of the tranquil expanse of waters. This day we worshipped, after our peculiar fashion—worshipped the God of Nature in Nature, his most sacred temple; a temple not built with hands, and in which lip-homage or knee-worship would be profanation.”*

Here is a description of one of his solitary walks :—

*January 8, 1861.—Walked, by St. Clement’s Bay, through wooded ways, to the ancient church of Grouville (A.D. 1322), from which we proceeded to Gorey; here \*\*\*\*\* turned homeward, while I inspected the Castle of Montorgueil, alone, pacing in unbroken solitude its echoing cloisters, visiting with a thrill of horror the gloomy cell where William Prynne, Puritan author of *Histriomastix*, was confined for many weary days; and, bending*

over the battlements from which, with a rope of twisted sheets, Dean Bandinel and his son resigned themselves to the terrors of the tempest and the sea, I ascended to the summit of the Donjon, and enjoyed a splendid view of the French Coast—white sands, verdurous hills, glittering domes, and sparkling spires. I then hovered about the neighbourhood of Anne-Port, Jeaffroy's Leap, and Gorey, till half-past three o'clock, when I got into the coach on the pier, and drove by St. Martin's, to the town of St. Helier."

But despite these tranquil dreamy enjoyments, for a moment he seemed about to decline into the bitterest mood of the dark unhappy period which followed his first revulsion from the faith of his childhood. As some of his friends, on their way to a fancy-ball, came in to show themselves in their dresses one evening, the cynical mood broke out in him once more, in scrutinizing thus in little an image of the "fleeting mockery life," and the first indication of relapse occurs in the entry of the following day. "A\*\*\*," he writes, "went in the character of W\*\*\* to a fancy-ball . . . C. H\*\*\*\*\* called, on the departure of \*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\*. He was attired in the costume of a Grecian page, in which he appeared to great advantage. . . . R\*\*\*\*\* walked in in his fancy-dress! He personated the M\*\*\*\*\* de V\*\*\*\*\* de la Court de Louis XVI. Powdered wig and peruke, point-lace cravat, scarlet

gold-embroidered vest and coat, blue sash, glittering star, tights, silk-stockings, and gold-buckled shoes . . . Poor fools! Unconscious Puppets! Vanity of vanities." And in the Journal of the next day occurs a remarkable note, by the light of which certain passages of his writings, which will be printed further on, are made intelligible and clear. His mind had been running out in various tentative speculations, and this is one in the contemplation of which it paused for a time with a somewhat pleased fascination :—

"*January 13, 1861.*—A. E. declares that of late he has become a confirmed Diabolater! He has got *Æschylus's Prometheus Vinc-tus*, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Byron's *Cain* and *Heaven and Earth*, also Bailey's *Festus* and Longfellow's *Golden Legend*, bound up in the same volume with Marlowe's *Faustus* and Goethe's *Faust*. He calls this book his Bible, and the latter two dramas he entitles his Apocrypha. He believes, he says, that Sathanas is the real benefactor of mankind, and that his character has been traduced and maligned by Scriptural and other writers. 'He goeth about persuading many;' but for my part I am unable to discern any sound reasons for embracing such a creed, which appears to me to be in direct opposition to common-sense and right-mindedness. The following is a transcript of the prayer or address which A. E. declares he offers up

night and morning. I have got the original copy in his own hand-writing :—

“O fallen, fallen Angel of Light, to whose noble but unsuccessful efforts to shake the iron throne of Tyranny, the creeds of the most moral and intellectual nations point, by the shadows of legend and of myth !

“O Thou, who in Thy high estate didst abhor oppression, and didst endeavour to trample Falsehood and Injustice under foot, and to invest with the radiant mantle of Truth the mysteries of Life and of Death !

“O Thou, who in Thy long-protracted war against the Giant Evil, who, by wilful and obstinate mal-administration, mars and paralyzes the fair Universe which He has created ; Thou, who, in Thy struggle to overthrow the ‘colossal skeleton’ who giveth life to spirits, bodies, fruits, flowers, in order that He may torture that life away ; Thou, who, in Thine attempt to conquer Death and bind him in everlasting bonds, hast undergone innumerable wrongs : hast suffered calumny, and misrepresentation to those whom Thou wouldst have benefited ; expulsion from the realms of beauty and loveliness, where, knowing the wrongs and injuries inflicted by the Supreme Power on His meaner creatures, Thou couldst not rest content !

“Receive, O sceptreless and crownless King, accept the sympathy of those Thou lovest ! Ground

down, as Thou Thyself, beneath the inexorable tyranny of an all-powerful Being, our sympathy and our gratitude are all, all that we can offer ! *We* melt away, like the shadows of the evening, into the starless night of Time, whilst Thine existence of torments may continue even unto Eternity ! Yet we have a strong faith in the far results of ages. O Loving Spirit, is there not still hope ? ”

Such speculations could not be entertained unheralded or unsucceeded by many melancholy trains of thought ; and the note of the 15th January reveals a condition of mind which, happily, of late had not been frequent with him, and from which he soon again emerged :—

“ *January* 15, 1861.—To-day we walked to Bouley Bay and back. My spirit is overclouded with gloom. My heart rises up in arms against the Maker and the Creatures. I see nothing but evil, evil, evil around and above me. Destruction holds the supreme sway everywhere. I, I myself, for ever destroy and am destroyed for ever. Death, death, death. Every birth a death, and every marriage a myriad deaths. O blind race of man, *what* is Death ? Tell me, *what is* Death, that ye laugh and weep, and weep and laugh, from day to day, from the dark brow even to the grey, and cover with the gloss of falsehood the skeleton ye cannot hide ! I asked it of the Maker, I besought a reply on bended knees and with streaming eyes, but the Maker answered

me not. I invoked the powers of darkness, the Prince of the Powers of the Air, but no ! no answer I received. Is it possible that Death surrounds us and besets us, on every side to which we turn ourselves, and yet we know not what may be the nature of our enemy ? Alas ! I know not : albeit there be some who *say* they do. All is darkness and ignorance to me. Death, death, death ! The black coffin, the black horses, the black plumes !

ὦ φύσις, ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὥς μέγ' εἶ κακὸν."

Just about the same time came a letter from a well-meaning college friend, most inopportune as usual, tendering him evangelical admonitions ; and, more appropriately, asking him for a description of Jersey. The request he endeavours to satisfy by describing the Island as he imagined it would appear in the full glory of spring-time and early summer ; the admonitions receive a straightforward though (to the recipient) probably unintelligible response, in consonance with the unsettled spirit of the foregoing extracts :—

LETTER VIII. (*To \*\*\*\*\*.*)—" *Jersey, January 20, 1861.*—My dear \*\*\*\*\*,—You ask me for a description of this Island. I shall be most happy to comply with your request, as far as my limited capacities will permit.

"Before I proceed, let me beg you will accept my thanks for your religious exhortations, for which, as

I believe them to have been offered with sincerity, I am truly and sincerely grateful. However, I take this opportunity of stating to you, in strict confidence, the fact that my views on the subject of religion are in many respects widely different from, and in some respects diametrically opposite to, yours. But you will readily understand that I am unwilling to compromise myself either by impugning your opinions or by obtruding my own upon your notice, without an expressed wish on your part that I should do so; and the expression of such a wish I neither solicit nor recommend. This is the course of conduct I have always pursued, and always shall pursue, in such circumstances as the present. My reasons must, doubtless, appear obvious.

“In order to do full justice to the objects of nature in a description, it is necessary to contemplate those objects from the most favourable point of view presented by the vicissitudes of the seasons; and when it is one’s purpose to render a word-picture attractive to the reader, it should be one’s aim to convey a faithful representation of the scenery one describes in all its beauty and in all its bloom. For what artist will paint us the rose-bush without its unfolded blossom, or the vine without its clustering fruit? Let us, then, suppose it to be a lovely morning in the month of May. Awakened by the songs and shadows of the birds at our casement we arise; and, after having breakfasted in French

fashion on fruits and light wines, we saunter forth amid the labyrinthine complexities of the wooded lanes which diverge in every direction from St. Helier. We wander on for about a mile between verdurous banks, starred and gemmed all over with vari-coloured flowers, and redolent with the fragrance of the early summer. At length we pause before a wicket opening into a grove of yews and holm-oaks, overpeered by the battlements of a lofty tower. This is the Tour d'Auvergne, so called from the circumstance of its having been founded by the late Philippe d'Auvergne, Duc de Bouillon, on the summit of an ancient tumulus, for the origin of which a romantic legend accounts in the following manner :—

“A monstrous serpent, more terrible than that which encountered Regulus and his army on the banks of the river Bagradas, at one time desolated the fair isle of Jersey. At last a puissant and valorous knight, the Lord of Hambye, came over from the continent to destroy the monster, and succeeded in the enterprise. His young squire, who had attended him during the conflict, being actuated by the irresistible passions of lust and ambition, assassinated his lord, as Macbeth murdered Duncan, in his sleep. He then returned and told the widowed lady that her knight had been killed by the dragon, and that he had expressed it as his dying request that the lady of Hambye should yield without delay



her hand and her heart to the esquire of her lord. The credulous lady was deceived into compliance ; but the murderer could find no happiness in his prosperity. A guilty conscience tore him with remorse, and his very sleep was disturbed by horrid and distracting dreams, which caused him frequently to cry aloud that his hands were imbued in his master's blood. Ere long his guilt was discovered, and he paid the penalty with his head. The lady, inconsolable for the loss of her beloved lord, caused the mound before us to be reared over his hallowed ashes.

“ Let us enter the wicket, pass through the lights and shadows of the grove, and ascend the winding staircase which conducts to the summit of the tower. Here an unrivalled panoramic prospect suddenly bursts upon our view. A full-blown garden, fifty miles in circumference, cinctured by a blue expanse of water, lies immediately beneath our feet. Umbrageous orchards, clothed in flowers, stretch before us on this side and on that, so numerous that the greater portion of the Island appears to be overspread with a brilliant sheet of apple-blossoms. On the north-west are the steep, scarped cliffs of Plémont, Grosnez, and Bouley Bay, sternly frowning over the billows that break in spray-showers at their feet. On the south, the fortress of Elizabeth Castle, celebrated as the temporary residence of Charles II., reposes on its shadow

in the glassy waters of St. Aubin's Bay. Above it Fort Regent, the citadel of the Isle, stands in gloomy grandeur on its rocky acropolis. More toward the east, we descry, springing from a craggy headland, the shattered towers and turrets of Montorgueil Castle, twined with clinging ivy. Within that hoar structure Prynne, the Puritan author of the *Histriomastix*, bewailed the loss of his liberty in a noisome dungeon; and here also the royal heir of Boscobel drained the wassail-bowl in his exile . . . . Beyond, the triple towers of Coutances Cathedral, glittering cottages, sparkling spires, elegant châteaux, darkling forests, and emerald hills, convince us of our proximity to the pleasant land of France. We can also perceive, in the narrow belt of sea which separates us from the Continent, the crag-bound coast of Alderney, and the rocky islet of Chaussey, the latter celebrated as having been the site of a convent of the Cordelier monks, who sought retirement from the stormy world in that romantic retreat.—My friend, amid such scenes as these, even disrobed as they now are of the glories of their summer vesture; in the tranquil valley, in the leafless wood, by the tinkling rivulet; or while hearkening to the roar of the voiceful sea; the holy sense of gratitude arises from my soul, as incense from an altar-flame; and, while I am forced to regard lip-homage or knee-worship as almost a profanation of the sublime temple of Nature, my

heart is ever thrilled by the mystic influences of beauty and of love, as the chords of a suspended lyre tremble in sweetest music responsive to the whispers of the moving wind—

‘*Entranced* in prayer,  
I worship the Invisible alone.’

“Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

On the 24th he writes—“I am studying Goethe’s *Faust* with more ardour and intensity than on any former perusal of that wonderful work;” and he winds up his account of the month’s occupations and proceedings with the following passage, which is a fair picture of his manner of life during that tranquil time:—“The last four days have been distinguished by remarkably fine weather,—blue unclouded skies, warm suns, and balmy south-winds. We explored the Castle of Montorgueil, lingering amid broken arches, amid shattered towers and echoing corridors, and linking together many a misty memory of the past. We basked in the warm sunshine on the Victoria Pier, criticising the appearance of the by-passers, and conjecturing of their conditions, their fortunes, and their inner being. We strolled among the woods and heaths of ‘Swiss Valley;’ and, this evening, wandered over the graves and among the tombstones of the St. Saviour’s Cemetery, where we discussed the improbabilities that beset the theory of a future state. The great round

sun was slowly sinking into the red-tinged deep, and threw a ruddy glare on the tower and vaulted roof of the old Norman Church, causing it to loom almost spectrally from behind its surrounding grove of dark evergreen-oaks. The gravestones glimmered like ghosts in their winding-sheets among the luxuriant shrubs in which they are nearly hidden ; and the whole scene was fantastically and wildly picturesque."

CHAPTER IX. 1861, ÆT. 19—.

correspondence with G. A. C. commenced.—Letter IX. : *Friendship proffered.*—Noble Alliance and Lofty Enterprise.—Letter X. : *Explanation of late Studious Habits ; Analogy of the Christian Religion to the “ Constitution and Course of Nature.”*—Extracts from Journal.—Walks and Scenes in Jersey described.—Opinion of Longfellow’s “*Evangeline.*”—Letter XI. : *A Religion of Charity as opposed to a Religion of Faith ; Doctrine of Responsibility questioned ; a Reminiscence of “ The Doctor,” T. C. D. ; New Residence described.*—More Extracts from Journal.—Oratorio and High Mass ; Reflections.—Letter XII. : *Notes on Butler’s “ Analogy.”*—Letter XIII. : *Religion of Charity.*—Theory of the Influence of Paul on the Religion of Christ.—Letter XIV. : *Historical Evidences of Christianity ; Heroic Resolutions.*—More Extracts from Journal.—Letter XV. : *“ Charity versus Faith ” again.*—Letter XVI. : *Inspiration of Old Testament ; Doctrine of Eternal Punishment ; Intention of Visiting the Continent.*—Letter XVII. : *Discussion of Questions of Inspiration and Eternal Damnation.*

ON the 2nd of February he writes :—“ I walked by myself in a meditative mood nearly as far as St. John’s. . . . I went down to Le Ferre’s library for *Macmillan’s Magazine*, which I wanted on account of an essay on Shelley by the Editor ;<sup>1</sup> and, on my way, I met a soldier’s funeral.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Masson.—ED.

The dead march—an unusual one, remarkable for the shrill occasional wailing, imitated by the fife and clarionets—affected me exceedingly.” And on the following day, being Sunday, he again goes a round of inspection through the various religious houses; “visited,” as he says, “the Puseyite Church, The Town Church (French), the French R. C. Chapel, the English R. C. Chapel, the Chapelle Évangélique, St. Luke’s, and the New Jerusalem[.]”

He had been lately exercising himself by writing an Essay on the Life of Shelley, and his mind, from dwelling on the themes which the subject suggested, and speculating in the manner exhibited in the preceding chapter, fell back dreaming over the days in which, with mingled rapture and awe, he first entered upon the paths of investigation; and thus to the romantic circumstances in which the impulse thither first arose, and to the acquaintance with whom such recollections were indissolubly linked. The two acquaintances, as related, had parted, that dark summer-day, after their comfortless walk, and had not met again. The poem “To G. A. C.” had been tendered to Mr. C\*\*\*\*\*\*, through the hands of the much-loved friend of both; and various other snatches of verse, written in the summer of 1860, had been sent to be criticised, and had been returned with comments, which had been commented upon again; but there had been no intercommunication by mouth or by letter. The

veiled critic, whose praises had been so often spoken in Armstrong's ear, began now to assume in his imagination something of imposing mystery and indefinable grandeur. But, above all, it seemed to him that here was one, somewhat his senior in age, and, as he believed, his superior in experience, whom it would be healthful to know; and who, as he had shown courage and intelligence in that momentous discussion, and had further exhibited certain distinct symptoms of a fervent love of poetry and of nature, might prove one of the most delectable of friends. Hesitating long, lest haply he should meet with a repulse which neither his pride nor his honesty could brook, he at length succeeded in penning an epistle, in a light-hearted and merry vein, and sent it to the veiled prophet in the hope that it might initiate a correspondence, and help to consolidate a friendship. Whether the prophet slept, or was journeying in a far country, or whether his lofty spirit despised the levity which the letter, written under such peculiar circumstances, betrayed, does not anywhere appear. But the manner in which it *seemed* to be received was such that the sensitive and warm-hearted writer was wounded to the quick. And I think it worth while to present here, as illustrating his character, and as exhibiting the unfavourable auspices under which a strong and enduring friendship was begun, the main portion of his remonstrance, which he

thought of sufficient importance in his own history to preserve in duplicate :—

LETTER IX. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Jersey, February 25, 1861.—... It would not be more unreasonable to expect to find exquisite poetry in *Hudibras*, or charity—in its broader and more comprehensive acceptation—in a bigot, whether infidel or Christian, than it is to demand from me a *sensible letter*. It is not my habit to take the same pains in the composition of a billet as should be exacted in the preparation of a royal speech or a parliamentary budget. I shall endeavour, however, to be in a more serious mood . . . and I shall do so in the hope that my advances may meet with a more favourable reception than that which it was their fortune to encounter on the former occasion. On this rather repellent subject I shall merely say, that you are widely mistaken in your estimate of my character, if you imagine that, had I been treated with such marked contempt, such pointed discourtesy, by any one on this earth except yourself, I should not consider myself guilty of the most despicable and most truckling servility if I ever condescended to hold further communication with the person who thus thought proper to affront me. The letter which you have disdained to answer was, I readily admit, frivolous and nonsensical to a reprehensible degree; but I am unable to persuade myself that I am not justified in believing that you



could have failed to perceive and to acknowledge to yourself that it was meant in all kindness and friendliness of feeling. . . . I felt strongly the delicacy of soliciting your correspondence, as [that] of one with whom I had previously enjoyed an intercourse of a very peculiar as well as very important nature ; and I felt that, if I were addressing myself to one who was a perfect stranger, the difficulty of my task would have diminished to almost nothing in comparison. Under these circumstances I wrote the letter in question ; and although, in so doing, I omitted to conform with strictness to the narrow rules of etiquette ('or of common sense,' you will doubtless add—I plead guilty), I anticipated at the smallest a reply from one whom, if I erred in supposing him to be a friend . . . . But, let it pass. I willingly acknowledge myself to blame for having inadvertently treated you with apparent levity ; nor can I afford a stronger proof of my wish to become oblivious of your unexpected unkindness than by writing to you as I now do. Dear C\*\*\*\*\*, I come before you, if I may compare small things with great, even as Torquato Tasso before Antonio Montecatino.<sup>1</sup> I desire your friendship in this life of hollowness and insincerity, 'of harlots' smiles and tradesmen's poisonous sweets,' as you have yourself, forcibly rather than elegantly, expressed it. There is

<sup>1</sup> He was thinking of a well-known scene in Goethe's "Torquato Tasso," (Act ii. sc. 3).—ED.

only one in this sad world whom I can call my *friend*, in the fullest and noblest sense of that most sacred word. G. B\*\*\*\*\* is also dear to you, and to him I am indebted for all I know and all I esteem of your character. For the warmth of his heart, for the sincerity of his attachment, for the purity of his principles, for the ardency of his desire to obtain the hidden truth, I have long admired him and loved him. . . . Consider the important influence we have exercised on one another's characters, views, and beliefs, even within the short period of our strange acquaintance. I can never remember without a deep-drawn sigh the day on which we for the first time met—the blue, unclouded sky, the purple mountains, the tinkling brook, the verdurous plain, the sparkling city, and the vast and boundless main. The melody of that voice still lingers in my ear,—of that voice which invested with the charm of unpremeditated eloquence and with the glow of boyish enthusiasm those themes which were ever dearest in my eyes. That day was worthy a white mark, it was one of the brightest that I ever passed. Then, again, the gloomy contrast presented by the sunless morning on which we stood within the ruined shell of the 'Danish Castle,'<sup>1</sup> amid the bare and woodless downs! That day was certainly the most eventful in my life, as it has influenced my destinies more than any

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 47.—ED.

other. *Hoc fonte derivata clades*—or perhaps it may be otherwise. At all events from that day forth my nature underwent a complete change. On that memorable occasion I was Iolaus and you were Hercules; but for your assistance I should never have reached the goal which I have long since left behind. Why, then, I ask, should we not join in firm and steady friendship, and strengthen each other by mutual encouragement,—we, who have entered together boldly and fearlessly the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Why should we not struggle onward side by side on the perilous way which we have chosen, and comfort each other by the hope that we may yet, unscathed and unharmed, ascend, hand in hand,

‘Upon the great world’s altar-stairs  
That slope thro’ darkness up to God?’

“But I would not have myself misunderstood. If you have any serious objection to become my friend, if you deem me unworthy of your confidence, avow it—conceal nothing. I cannot suppress the yearning which my spirit feels towards yours; but I can submit to disappointment rather than to dishonour. It shall not be said that I obtruded my friendship upon any one who would rather have rejected than accepted it.—Yours truly, EDMUND JOHN ARMSTRONG.”

The response which these manly expressions drew

forth was conceived in equal generosity, of which his next letter contains unstinting acknowledgment :—

LETTER X. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Jersey, March 7, 1861.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—Your letter has afforded me unbounded satisfaction, both on account of the ingenuous frankness of the statements, and the manly earnestness of the sentiments which it contains. The apology with which it opens, while it 'lays a flattering unction to my soul,' has not only proved to me the noble generosity of your character, but it has also taught me the fallaciousness of hasty and inconsiderate judgments . . . It is again my turn to apologize, and I do so with the greater alacrity in consideration of the harsh language which I unfortunately employed in the expression of my unmerited censures.

' Nunc ego mitibus  
Mutare quæro tristia, dum mihi  
Fias recantatis *amicus*  
Opprobriis . . . .'<sup>1</sup>

"Yet indeed I can trace no shadow of resentment in any portion of this letter, which is characterized from beginning to end by all that I could have desired of confidence and goodwill. The warm acceptance with which you have greeted my offer of friendship, has filled me with unfeigned delight. The graceful and elevated imagery which you have

<sup>1</sup> Hor., Carmen XVI. (*Palinodia ad Amicam*).—ED.

adopted in expressing your ready compliance with my desire that our friendship should be consecrated to a far higher object than that which unites in fellowship ordinary men, has not only ministered a keen sense of pleasure to my intellect, but, considered as the offspring of sincerity, it has found also a deep echo in my heart. . . Above all, the Promethean energy which this letter evinces,—energy not to be subdued by suffering nor baffled by a succession of defeats,—has caused me to triumph with exultation in the thought that I have at length found a friend whose unyielding strength of will may supply the deficiencies of mine in the toilsome ascent for which, without such assistance, I should prove ill-qualified indeed.—It had been my fixed resolution to study Divinity in the University of Dublin after the completion of the usual course, not with a view to entering the Church, but in order that I might either tear asunder, or become entangled in, ‘the petty cobwebs we have spun’ to prove the comprehensibility of that which is incomprehensible. It was not alone ambition, but a sense of duty which urged me to devote myself so exclusively and energetically as I did to the attainment of a sound education; as I hoped by this means to brace my intellect for the great contest to which I looked forward with eager expectancy. My health has been so completely broken that the accomplishment of my original design is now, I fear,

wholly impracticable. But I see no reason why I should not persevere to the best of my abilities in the study of the Evidences of Christianity, especially as I may now expect to obtain invaluable aid from you. . . .”

And if anything more than such declarations were needed to prove the intensity of his pleasure at the consolidation of this friendly compact, it is supplied by the note in his own private Journal—“This letter made my heart bound with joy.”

A friendship formed under such peculiar conditions, a kind of Rudel's love, a friendship between two interrelatively almost imaginary beings, could hardly be expected to exist always unruffled by disappointments and the rude shocks of reality. And it was, at times, subsequently very rudely disturbed by the sudden revelation of radical antagonisms of character, creating such pain as wedded couples feel who have married somewhat impulsively on the spur of a love at first sight, or on the interchange of portraits. The characters of the two correspondents, nobly engaged with mutual help and encouragement in a sublime enterprise, were indeed the very antitheses of one another. Until several years from the date of the above letter had passed, I think I may safely say that they did not meet face to face more than half-a-dozen times; and when they did so come together, one at least was seldom quite satisfied with the results, as he frankly and straight-

forwardly acknowledges and explains in letters which succeed. Yet the bond which was now riveted was never to be broken asunder; and never was friendship formed with more generous aims or held together by more grateful memories.

I shall now transcribe in their order the greater number of the letters which Armstrong contributed to this singular correspondence, omitting those portions which would be unintelligible unless read side by side with the letters to which they refer, those passages which are too purely controversial, and those which are particularly private and personal. Here and there the flow will be interrupted by brief abstracts and explanations, and some descriptive passages from his Journal and my own narrative. But, as a rule, the letters will serve as their own commentary, and will fit themselves together as integral portions of an autobiography. And it will be seen how his confidence in the invisible correspondent strengthened as time went on, till at last on one subject at least he communicated his deepest and most secret feelings, as one speaking to a confessor whose voice is heard through the grating of his box, while his form and countenance are concealed.

LETTER X. *continued* (To G. A. C.—*Jersey, March 17, 1861.*)—" . . . I have never yet read Butler's *Analogy*, although, more than two years ago, when I began to consider with latitude the subject of Religion, I commenced that celebrated work with

the intention of reading it through. If I remember rightly, the chief, if not the only, cause which prevented me fulfilling this intention was my inability to acquiesce in the premises of the treatise, namely, the assumption of the existence of an intelligent Author of Nature, and the validity of probable evidence in contradistinction to demonstrative, as a ground of *Faith*. The first of these objections deterred me for a considerable period from the perusal of Paley's *Evidences*, beyond the first few pages. However, I shall make it my duty to devote a portion of my leisure (*i.e.* leisure from pleasure-seeking) to the study of Butler, in the hope of being able to confront and overthrow some more of the spectres which haunt the dark regions of the mind of man. It is a nice distinction that you make between 'being silenced' and 'being convinced,' and, in my investigations of the *Evidences* I have always kept it in mind. It is one thing to be unable to refute the arguments in favour of the truth of Christianity; but it is quite another to *believe* such stories as those of Adam's rib, the talking serpent, the rod of Aaron, the cessation of the sun's and moon's revolution, the destruction of the fifties by fire called down from heaven to Elijah the Tishbite, Jonah and the great fish, and not least, the seemingly ludicrous and incredible scheme of man's so-called redemption and salvation, which if a man believe he shall live, &c. &



Concerning this latter I know not by what power of argument, drawn from evidence or analogy, I can ever be led to differ from Shelley's opinion, *viz.*, [that] 'The sublime human character of Jesus Christ was deformed by an imputed identification with power who tempted, betrayed, and punished the innocent beings who were called into existence by his sole will; and for the period of a thousand years the spirit of this most just, wise, and benevolent of men has been propitiated by myriads of ecatombs of those who approached the nearest to his innocence and wisdom, sacrificed under every aggravation of atrocity and variety of torture.'—Verily it is time to shake off the hideous nightmare of the old Mosaic fable! But we shall not 'lie down with shadows in eternal gloom.' Let us rather endeavour to 'work out the lingering twilight.' And if we fail in our endeavour, I think there exists a sure prospect of a burst of such glorious sunlight as shall make the twilight and the gloom sink down for ever and ever into the depths of the outworn past. Can you guess what I mean? The enigma is not so difficult of solution as the sphinx's riddle; so, if you find it out, don't expect that I shall consider you as clever as Œdipus, although cleverer than many a dogmatic wiseacre of the day.—I must pause here for the present, as I have to go out and walk with a [bevy] of young ladies. Pity my unfortunate condition! I always

resemble my namesake, the author of the *Art of Preserving Health*, who is described by Thomson as a man 'profoundly silent,' and who 'quite detested talk,'<sup>1</sup> whenever it is my misfortune to be compelled to associate with the locomotive clothes-racks of the other sex.—Ever yours sincerely, E. J. ARMSTRONG."

(JOURNAL) *same date*.—"In the afternoon \*\*\*\*\* and I to the Public Library, where I studied Butler's *Analogy*. . . . Wrote a portion of *The Earl*.<sup>2</sup>

(JOURNAL.) "*March 9, 1861*.—Had a delicious walk along the sands, up the St. Peter's Road, and home by the St. Lawrence Road. We culled daffodils, violets, and primroses in profuse abundance. The weather was charming, and the [French] coast stood out in clear outline against the bluest of skies.

<sup>1</sup> In the "Castle of Indolence"—

"With him was sometimes join'd, in silent walk  
(Profoundly silent, for they never spoke),

*One shy'er still, who quite detested talk ; \**

Oft stung by spleen, at once away he broke,  
To groves of pine and broad o'ershadowing oak ;  
There inly thrill'd, he wander'd all alone,  
And on himself his pensive fury woke.

Ne ever utter'd word, save when first shone

The glittering star of eve—"Thank heaven ! the day is done."

\* "These lines refer to the poet Armstrong. See Campbell's 'Lives' &c." (MS. Note in E. J. A.'s copy of Thomson.)—ED.

<sup>2</sup> A fragment of this poem is printed in his "Poetical Works." See New Edition, p. 357.—ED.

Read Kingsley's *Miscellanies*, vol. ii., and Butler's *Analogy*. Wrote in the evening a portion of *The Earl*.

(JOURNAL.) "*March* 13, 1861.—To the sands of St. Aubin's Bay, and listened to the play and the roll of the ocean,

'Dragging adown the beach the rattling pebbles, and leaving Inland and far up the shore the stranded boats of the sailors !'<sup>1</sup>

Walked in the afternoon through M. N\*\*\*\*\*'s, and through the Vingtaine de St. Sauveur. Argued on theology in St. Sauveur's graveyard—delightful thought-evoking spot. Read Butler, Kingsley, and the *Prometheus* of Æschylus. What a magnificent drama is the latter ! in conception how transcendently glorious ! in execution how perfect !

(JOURNAL.) "*March* 14, 1861.—Walked on the St. Aubin's sands, and saw a review of the 30th Regiment on the beach. The band performed several spirited airs ; the soldiers, in their scarlet tunics, and with their bayonets flashing in the bright sunbeams, went through their complicated manœuvres and evolutions with picturesque effect ; the blue calm sea behind them murmuring on the snowy sand, the promontory of Noirmont in its magic garment of blended colours stretching beyond—green, brown, violet, and dark yellow—studded with shining villas, and kissed at its feet by the

<sup>1</sup> Longfellow's "*Evangeline*."—ED.

whispering waves. Read Butler, Kingsley, the *Seven Against Thebes*, and some other poetry.

(JOURNAL.) "*March 15, 1861.*—I read in the morning Longfellow's *Evangeline*. I was not aware of the exquisite idyllic beauty of this poem until this perusal of it; on the two former occasions on which I read it I paid so much attention to the versification and expression that the sweetness and majesty of the poetry escaped my notice. Walked through orchards and budding woods in the 'Swiss Valley' direction; paced the St. Aubin's sands, and promenaded on the Victoria Pier. The weather was delightfully warm; soft blue sky faintly dappled with vapoury clouds; balmy south-west breezes blowing whispers of luxuriant bliss from tropic climes; clear soft atmosphere, clothing the sea, the hills, the valleys, and the cliffs with an almost supernatural beauty and brilliance. Read Kingsley, Longfellow, Mrs. Ward's *Caffirland* . . ."

LETTER XI. (*To G. A. C.*)—" *Woodville House, Jersey, March 17, 1861.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—You have drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard. You have rushed with headlong fury to the desperate struggle, in which you have done battle with the many-headed monster, foot to foot and hand to hand, and have driven him to his den of darkness howling, and gnashing his fangs, and belching forth blasts of flame. Right manfully has the champion wielded the two-edged falchion of Truth

and prevailed right valiantly in the perilous encounter. But why does he send forth the wail of anguish from lips that should have uttered the shout of triumph? Why does the victor call on Death, and twine his brows with the flowers of the victim in place of the conqueror's well-earned wreath? Has then the fiery breath of the dragon withered up his dauntless soul, that, like the multitudes who wander forever throughout the gloomy halls of Eblis,<sup>1</sup> he strikes his right hand upon his blazing heart and proclaims that Hope has left it, never to return? Take courage, dear friend, and be of good cheer! Despair not yet, nor turn your reeking brand to your own destruction. Trust me, there is not far off a magic influence whose power can clothe the rugged crags of life with vernal bloom, and tinge with a warm rose-blush the snowy peaks that loom so coldly and so fearfully overhead; a power which can change the shades of night into the clear brilliance of the noonday, the roar of the ocean to the rivulet's purl, and the yelling of the hoarse-throated storm to the music of an archangel's plumes 'winnowing the crimson dawn.' Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, the waters of peace, and drink freely! Come ye whose lips are parched and dried with the dust of creeds that are dead and are trodden under foot! Come, and I will show you the sealed

<sup>1</sup> "Vathek."—ED.

and hidden fountain, now no longer choked with sands from the burning desert of superstition, but gushing in refreshful streams to heal the weak-hearted, and give strength to the broken in spirit!

“You will forgive the dithyrambic lawlessness of my style when I assure you that I am thoroughly in earnest while I write, and find it impossible to express myself with the symmetry and precision of sober prose. I believe I am about to introduce to you a principle—noble, beautiful—which, if carried into execution, would shake the temple of Tyranny from pinnacle to basement, and cause the Tyrant God, like Dagon of old, to grovel eternally on the threshold of his shrine, with the head and hands cut off . . . . It is this:—Faith cannot be necessary to the happiness of mankind,<sup>1</sup> for Faith is the origin of all evil—the parent of internecine

<sup>1</sup> He had been much struck by the following passage in the “Shelley Memorials,” which he had come upon a few days previously, and which now encouraged him to give expression to opinions that he had long before formed independently (see above, p. 82):—

“Shelley appeared to Leigh Hunt to be far less hopeful than in former days, though otherwise unchanged. The two spent a delightful afternoon together during the brief stay of Shelley at Pisa, visiting the objects of note, and more especially the cathedral. Here the noble music of the organ deeply affected Shelley, who warmly assented to a remark of Leigh Hunt, *that a divine religion might be found out, if charities were really made the principle of it, instead of faith.*” (*Shelley Memorials*, chapter xiii.).—ED.

feud since the world began, setting the fathers against the children and the children against the fathers, city against city, nation against nation, friend against friend, brother against brother, sister against sister, wife against husband—turning the honey of love into the gall and wormwood of hatred. That which is productive of the most fearful miseries—oppressions, crusades, inquisitions, and so forth—must be in its very nature antagonistic to the happiness of individuals, and the prosperity of communities. Around the altar of Faith human blood has not ceased to flow in purple torrents ever since the day when Cain slew Abel for his blind adoration of that inexorable deity. Let it cease to flow. Let the sanguinary altar be razed to the ground. Let its place be remembered no more . . . But let Charity arise—Charity, enrobed in flowing raiment of virgin tinct, and treading with noiseless footfalls through the wrangling crowds, stilling the tempest of strife and hate, and spreading beauty, and glory, and peace, and loveliness, and chastity, and benevolence, over the whole earth ! . . . ‘The greatest of the three cardinal virtues is charity,’ said Paul. Ah me, had the good man of Tarsus advanced but one step farther, and written, ‘The *only* virtue is Charity,’ what a Paradise he would have unfolded to the eyes of miserable mortals ! What rivers of blood would never have been shed ! How many myriads of hearts (now,

alas! silent for ever) would have overflowed with loving-kindness, instead of quaking with terror or rankling with the hatred of hell! More than a thousand years ago (think of it!) would those golden days of *ver perpetuum* have commenced to run, the days foretold by the grand old Hebrew seer, by the sweet-singing bard of Mantua, and by England's martyr poet who perished in the waves of Spezzia. Nearly two thousand years ago! But is it too late now? Is there not yet hope? May *we* not struggle through the fiery surge, to reach the little islet that glitters like a priceless jewel in the centre of the seething wastes? May we not build an impregnable citadel, and unfurl a full-flowing standard, and proclaim an eternal war, not of force against force, or of guile against guile or force, but of goodness against that which is evil—

‘Irreconcilable to our grand foe,  
Who now triumphs, and, in the excess of joy,  
Sole reigning, holds the tyranny of Heaven?’

“You have, I perceive, anticipated me in proposing that we should criticise Butler's *Analogy* chapter by chapter. I purpose to send you a short critique of the Introduction and Chapter I. ('Of Future Life,') by Friday's post; and if you will send me yours by the same post, our end will thus without difficulty be compassed. I have read the first part of the treatise (*Natural Religion*) with attention



. . I once had the pleasure of discussing the doctrine of Responsibility with Mr. W\*\*\*\*—commonly known as ‘The Doctor’—of T. C. D.<sup>1</sup> We were walking, he and I, along the downs of Killiney Bay, between Bray Head and Dalkey Hill, in the autumn of 1858. It was Sunday, and we had just emerged from the little church at Bray, where we had been ‘sat upon’ by a reverend Poundtext for nearly an hour’s space. We proceeded to criticise the harangue, as we walked by the sea-side, and, in the course of our confabulation, I boldly, or rather recklessly, blurted out that ‘the doctrine of human responsibility was a most monstrous absurdity.’—W\*\*\*\*. ‘Gad, Doctor, I often thought that; but I wouldn’t advise you to talk so roundly with anybody else, Doctor!’—*Juvenile Sceptic*. ‘Very much obliged, Doctor, for your advice; but it’s very hard to have to hold one’s tongue in reverential awe of palpable fooleries.’—W\*\*\*\*. ‘Lord have mercy on my soul, Doctor; you appear to be quite an iconoclastic young covey, Doctor!’—I still pressed the subject, however, and we talked on it for fully two miles’ distance, till ‘The Doctor’ (worthy old soul!) became quite warm upon it, and ended in a Demosthenic denunciation, with a spice of Aristophanic drollery, speaking of the clergy as ‘those white-chokered humbugs, who had got the phosphorus of Evangelicalism rubbed upon their posteriors!’ Those are his very words;

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 63.—ED.

higher degree of presumption against than in favour of the truth and authenticity of that mysterious system. The plan by which I purpose to endeavour to effect this object is, naturally, twofold :—*First*, to overthrow the arguments commonly employed in favour of Christianity ; *secondly*, to adduce a number of arguments from evidence and analogy which shall effectually prove its falsity and absurdity. . . . .

“ In the Introduction to this celebrated work, as little is attempted to be proved, so also there is but little to disprove. I shall accordingly dwell on this portion of the treatise merely so long as will be necessary to make one or two observations, which, however, appear to me to possess considerable importance when viewed in connection with the remaining portions.

“ There are only four direct statements advanced in the Introduction, and each of these statements, not being supported by satisfactory evidence, appears to me to be false, for the following reasons :—

“ I. The existence of a Supreme Being is presupposed, without any attempt being offered to prove His existence. However, in the beginning of the Third Chapter of this treatise, there appears an argument which has been looked upon by many persons as incontrovertible, and which I here proceed to examine.

“ The statement with which the Third Chapter

opens, when thrown into a syllogistic form, will stand as follows :—

“All things which exhibit appearances of design are the work of an intelligent author ;

“The world exhibits marks of design ;

“Therefore the world is the work of an intelligent author.

“The same argument may, of course, be applied to man, thus :—

“All things which exhibit, &c. ;

“Man exhibits marks of design ;

“Therefore man is the work of an intelligent author.

“The same argument will *à fortiori* apply to God Himself—thus :—

“All things (*i. e.* entities) which, &c. ;

“God exhibits marks of design ;

“Therefore, God is the work of an intelligent author.

“And the same argument will apply equally to an intelligent author of God, and so on *ad infinitum*.

“It may be said in reply, that God does not exhibit marks of design in the same sense as man can be said to do so : but if, as Bishop Butler endeavours to prove, God is the governor of the world ; and if, as Bishop Butler also insists, He punishes our state of probation for moral discipline and improvement ;’ it must be admitted that He

has a purpose, and exists for the carrying out of that purpose ; and, consequently, that His existence is designed for that purpose—at least among other purposes.

“Again, it may be urged, that we do not know what can be the design of God’s existence, we have no ground for saying that His existence has a design. This objection is *prima facie* so exceedingly absurd, that I would merely reply by asking, Do we know what the design of the universe is? and, if not, how can we assert that its existence has a design? Or, do we pretend to know what is the design of man’s existence? Yet, although we do not know this, will any one assert that man does not exhibit marks of design?

“So that it appears that the most highly accredited argument in favour of the existence of a God, serves also as a proof of the existence of an infinite multiplicity of Gods. And hence it is evident that if there be only one God, this argument is utterly useless ; for it proves the very reverse, namely, the existence of more Gods than one. Therefore let the advocates of Christianity beware how they use this argument, as, while it proves one of their doctrines, it completely overthrows another not less important tenet of their faith.

“II. The passage quoted from Origen is—as has been remarked—the germ of the whole treatise ; for, if the author of the constitution of nature be

a different being from the author of revealed religion, of course all reasoning from nature to religion will be of no real value. Now, besides the fact that its validity depends mainly on an hypothesis (§ 1), the admissibility of which I have shown my reasons for denying, the analogical argument drawn by Butler from this passage appears to me very far indeed from conclusive. For, it will be admitted, that this thesis is equally applicable to the Koran, the *Mishcât-ul-Masábîh*, or the Book of Aga Acber, which contain the doctrines and dogmas of Islamism. Indeed, it is more applicable to any of these ridiculous books than it is to the Bible, as the inconsistencies and incomprehensibilities which are found in these books are far more numerous than those which are found in the Bible, and therefore present a fairer analogy to the innumerable incomprehensibilities and apparent inconsistencies of the universe. According, therefore, to the thesis of Butler founded upon Origen's dictum, it would appear that he who denies the Koran to have been derived from God on account of its contradictions and unintelligibilities, may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by Him. But what sane person, I would ask, will not ridicule the notion implied by this line of argument, that the greater the incredibility of a religious system, the stronger are its claims on our belief?

“III.—It is asserted that it is mere folly and

extravagance to speculate on a condition in which the world might have been placed, better than its present one. The only reason given in support of this assertion is, that we have not faculties for this kind of speculation. Now, upon reflection it will be found that what leads us to speculate upon the possibility of a better state of things in this world is the hypothesis that there exists a Supreme Being, whose attributes are omnipotence and justice. Granting that such a Being exists, we find it impossible to reconcile the state of things in this world with our ideas of justice conjoined with omnipotence; and our speculations on what might be a better condition of affairs are, in effect, a questioning or a denial of the justice and omnipotence of the Supreme Being. Hence, the assertion that we have not faculties for this kind of speculation is tantamount to an assertion that our ideas of justice conjoined with omnipotence are sure to be fallacious; for which assertion there is not a shadow of proof, but rather, as I think, a strong presumption of the contrary. For, if justice and omnipotence be terms to express ideas which are comprehensible (and indeed, what 'ideas' can, properly speaking, be said to be incomprehensible?), it will necessarily follow that our faculties are not more insufficient for speculating upon these than they are for speculating upon any other abstract ideas, as injustice, power, &c. If, then, our faculties are capable of

speculating on these matters, it cannot be mere folly and extravagance to employ them thus.

“IV. ‘Our whole nature,’ says Bishop Butler, ‘leads us to ascribe all moral perfection to God, and to deny all imperfection of Him. And this will for ever be a practical proof of His moral character, to such as will consider what a practical proof is; because it is the voice of God speaking in us. And from hence we conclude that virtue must be the happiness, and vice the misery, of every creature; and that regularity, and order, and right, cannot but prevail finally in a universe under his government!’

“This argument contains two apparent [flaws]; (a) the premises are false, and (b) the conclusion is contradictory to the facts of the case which it is the object of the treatise to prove.

“(a) It cannot be truthfully asserted that it is our whole moral nature which leads us to ascribe all moral perfection to God, since our belief in the perfection of God is only the result of our belief in Christianity. This observation is confirmed when we take into our consideration the beliefs of the most intellectual nations of antiquity, the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, concerning the moral imperfections of their various divinities; all of whom are represented by the priests and the poets as beings influenced by the same principles and passions as those which actuate the human breast.

“Nor can it be asserted with any more truth than the preceding, that the belief in the moral perfection of God is a practical proof of His moral character, on the ground that it is the voice of God speaking within us. For, in the first place, it must be demonstrated clearly that it *is* the voice of God speaking in us ; and, in the second place, if we were to follow this mode of reasoning, we should be led to infer that the moral imperfection of the mythological deities of the ancients, and of many uncivilized nations of modern times, was a practical proof of their immoral character ; which would involve not only a belief in their existence, but also a belief that they actually spoke within the minds of their votaries.

“(b) The conclusion is contradictory to the facts of the case intended to be proved. For no one who is candid and impartial in his reasoning will believe that a state of eternal punishment for temporal misdemeanours is reconcileable with the final predominance of regularity, and order, and right in the universe. But on this latter subject I shall dwell more at large when I come to consider Bishop Butler’s disquisitions on the Government of God by Rewards and Punishments.

“My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—as these notes were jotted down in great haste, I have aimed neither at eloquence nor elegance, but merely at correctness. If you discover any sophistry in my reasoning, be so



good as to let me know of it at the earliest.—Yours very sincerely, E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER XIII. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*Jersey, March 27, 1861.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—Very many thanks for your long letter of the 24th inst., which I grieve to say I shall be unable to answer in full for some time,—say, a fortnight or so,—as I have been attacked within the last few days by a return of my disorder, and am suffering considerably from it at present. Perhaps you are not aware that my complaint is of a nature to preclude altogether the possibility of intellectual exertion, however inconsiderable, during the continuance of its more dangerous symptoms. Were it otherwise, I should be only too happy to answer your letter with the care and amplitude which it undoubtedly demands; but under the present adverse circumstances, I am able to do absolutely nothing but dream over plays, poems, and novels, basking in the warm sunshine of the greenhouse, or sauntering slowly and meditatively, like Jaques, under the shade of melancholy boughs. I shall endeavour to send you some short notes on the First Chapter of Butler—concerning which my views do not at all coincide with yours—as soon as ever my health will admit of the exertion of writing down my thoughts with some show of accuracy—unless indeed ‘the dissolution of flesh, skin, and bones’ take place sooner than, arguing from analogy, I should naturally expect; in which

case my 'living power,' if it continue to exist, will certainly not be capable of proving its existence by inditing metaphysical disquisitions. I cannot desist, however, without saying a few words in defence of the principle (not for my sake, but for its sake only) which I advanced in a former letter, and which, to my great surprise, has failed to meet with your approbation. You object that Hatred is as much a virtue as Love, and that therefore Love is not the only virtue. This I grant without dispute; but yet I will maintain that Love is certainly *the principal virtue*, the fountain-head from whence flow all other virtues, which Love transcends even as the orb of day outshines the feebler luminaries that derive from him what little light they emit. Nay, even [that] Hatred which you elevate into the rank of a virtue is an off-shoot from Love, as a little reflection will convince you. You say, 'I will not love crime!' But why? Because you do love its opposite, honesty. You say, 'I will not love vice!' Why? Because you do love virtue. You will not love the 'self-seeking nor the base!' Why? Because you do love the generous and the noble.

"But you seem to have strangely misapprehended the meaning of my statement, or else, which is more probable, I must have expressed myself with singular incorrectness. What I meant to imply was simply this:—that Charity, and not Faith, should be the fundamental doctrine of every religion, and

the fundamental principle of all human actions. I am sure, moreover, that you will admit that had Jesus Christ inculcated the doctrine of Love, instead of, and to the exclusion of, that of Faith, and had such teaching as this been followed as his teaching, such as it is, *has been* followed out,—then, in that case, the happiness of mankind would have been promoted to a far higher degree than it has been. This I regard as a strong presumptive proof of the immeasurable superiority of a religion founded on the principle of Charity to a religion founded on the principle of Faith.

“ Again, you object that Faith was not the origin of the persecutions which I have laid to its score, but that those evils were the result of want of Faith. I must confess that, hearing *you* argue thus, I was struck with no small astonishment. It most assuredly was not *want of faith* that caused Bloody Mary to burn Ridley and Latimer, for not believing what she believed to be the truth. Nor can the Massacre of St. Bartholomew be attributed to *want of faith* either, I should think. On that occasion, was it because he did *not* believe in the truth of his religion that a man slew ruthlessly his nearest and dearest relations? I trow not. I could even wax eloquent on the subject, were I so disposed—*in facili causâ cuivis facile esse disertus*. But I will merely remind you of the existence of a certain well-known volume of close printing, entitled *The*

*Book of Martyrs*, compiled by one John Fox; I would merely say that it is, as I think, the foulest and most indelible blot on the scutcheon of Religionism; and I would add that if you have the hardihood to ascribe its existence to the *want of faith*—meaning, of course, by ‘faith,’ belief in the truth of one or other religious creed—you cannot at least ascribe its existence to the apotheosis of Charity; nor can you deny that, had Charity been substituted—as, thank Heaven! it is being gradually and imperceptibly substituted—for Faith, in the Dark and Middle Ages, or even in these latter days, neither the *Book of Martyrs* nor the details of the Syrian Massacres would have been added to the endless catalogue of human miseries.

“This is, in truth, a very gloomy view to take of history and of religion; and I should be delighted if I could exchange it for a brighter; but I fear I cannot do so until I am made acquainted with better arguments than you have offered me in support of your more genial views.

“If I have expressed myself too rudely, forgive me, and set it down to ill-health rather than to ill-will.

“I am, my dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—Yours sincerely, ‘while this machine is to me’ (for I can promise nothing further till you have refuted my argument against a future state), EDMUND JOHN ARMSTRONG.

"[*P.S.*] In anxious expectation I look for your demolition of my strictures on Butler's Introduction."

Besides the questions discussed in the foregoing letters, there had been others started and sifted in this correspondence ; and, among the latter, one in particular had been taken up by Armstrong with considerable warmth ; namely, the hypothesis that the doctrines of the Atonement and the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ were ingrafted into the system of Jesus after his death by the masterly intellect of Paul. It appeared to him that this hypothesis, if it could be established, would be so far satisfactory that, while it left the existence of such a person as Jesus Christ, as an historical fact, unshaken, it might help to separate the purely ethical teaching of the Divine Reformer from that startling body of theological and theosophic dogma from which his intellect had revolted. He searched diligently, accordingly, through every book bearing upon the question which he could at the moment secure, and became more and more fascinated by the hypothesis as he advanced ; at the same time insisting repeatedly that it was, "of course, only a theory, and not—at least as far as we are concerned—supported by any facts, any authorities, or any tangible arguments . . . I would examine the matter at greater length," he wrote, "if circumstances permitted ; but I have got no books of my own on the subject in Jersey, and the Library of St. Helier

contains a very limited selection of theological works." It was soon discovered that no reliable evidence whatever *could* be obtained in its support. And then, when he thought of his eagerness to establish it, his mind doubtless reverted to the moral which he had inscribed, for his own "future warning," on the lowest round of his "Baphometric Fire-Escape" in the September of the preceding year; and hence the spirit of self-rebuke in which he opens his next epistle:—

LETTER XIV. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Jersey, Easter Sunday, March, 31, 1861.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I heartily subscribe to your opinion that such failures as that which we have lately experienced are by no means matter of regret to those whose sole ambition is the discovery of naked, undisguised truth; and I would add that we should regard this blunder in the light of a warning lesson not to make overhasty conclusions, especially on matters relating to the mysterious and all-important subject which we have engaged ourselves to examine with impartiality.

"Holding these views, to the formation of which I have been led by the general drift of your last letter as well as by the above considerations, I shall endeavour, in my future notes on Butler's *Analogy*, and on other works on the Evidences, to assume the attitude of a candid and unbiassed inquirer, rather than that of an apologist for Infidelity, as I have done

on former occasions. The train of reasoning which brought me to adopt the latter position was somewhat as follows :—If Christianity be true, I cannot possibly escape eternal punishment, because it teaches that those who disbelieve its truth shall be damned, and I am one of those : the best thing that I can do, therefore, is to prove satisfactorily to my own mind that Christianity is not true. This is evidently absurd, as it implies that I *disbelieved* before I had *satisfactory grounds for my disbelief*.

“ Before I enter upon the metaphysical question of the soul’s immortality, I shall present to you a statement, necessarily brief and imperfect, of the *historical* considerations which have influenced my opinions. My object in doing so is to avoid falling into the same error as that into which I fell with regard to the theory of St. Paul, namely—treating a subject as a partisan instead of as a faithful umpire.

“ A *primâ facie* objection to the infidelistic theory certainly does lie in the fact, now stated for the hundredth time, that a small knot of men, for the most part grossly illiterate, succeeded in establishing, in the face of persecution, contempt, torture, death, or a life of hazard and of poverty, a completely novel scheme of religion ; which was founded on the ruins of, and retained many of the tenets of, a creed despised and hated by the dominant nations of the earth ; and which besides ran counter to almost all preconceived and generally adopted ideals of re-

ligion, whether contained in the dazzling ceremonies of public worship or taught and discussed in the select coteries of the philosophers. That such a religion spread itself in a comparatively short period from the rugged shores of the obscure Lake of Tiberias to the banks of the Euphrates, the Ebro, the Danube, and the Rhine ; that its first propagators met with every species of repulse, every form of indignity, every variety of cruelty which human ingenuity could devise ; that they were taught from the first to look forward to such treatment as even the bravest would quail to contemplate ; that they not only endured it with a meekness and a heroic indifference which must strike even their bitterest enemies with the profoundest admiration, but that they even exulted in it with great and exceeding joy ; these are facts attested by the unanimous evidence of all history, and cannot fail to excite a strong suspicion in a candid mind that the theory which describes the religion of Christ as an imposture is very improbable.

“ But, not to confine ourselves to probabilities. If the truth of Christianity is denied or questioned on [grounds other than historical], the alternative that remains is, that the accounts of Christ contained in the New Testament are fabulous. In this case, either (1) no such person as Christ ever existed ; or (2) if such a person ever did exist, he was an impostor or an enthusiast ; or (3) if he was neither an impostor



nor an enthusiast, but merely a preëminently righteous man, his biographers and historians were all combined in a conspiracy to deceive the world.

“(1) If the existence of such a person as Christ were matter of question, it is natural to expect that we should find a denial of his existence in the works of contemporary writers whose views were repugnant to Christianity. Now, not only do we find positive testimony as to his existence in the writings of Suetonius, Tacitus, Julian, Porphyry, Celsus, and many other Pagan writers, but also in the pages of the Jewish historian Josephus. To deny the existence of Christ in the presence of such overwhelming evidence is to convert the most authentic history into a tissue of romance and fable. It would be far less unreasonable, in truth, to deny the existence of Xerxes, because in this case Herodotus, whose credulity not seldom leads him into ludicrous positions, is the only historic writer whose testimony it would be necessary to gainsay; while in the other case it will be inevitable to prove that a large body of respectable Augustan writers are not entitled to credence even where their testimony concurs.

“(2) If he were an impostor or an enthusiast, his actions should be judged by the same criterion as that by which the conduct of similar persons is judged; and if he be found to have acted in a manner diametrically opposite to what would have been the conduct of an impostor or an enthusiast

situated in the same circumstances, he must have been actuated by a higher influence.

“(3) The third and last hypothesis may be very briefly dismissed, if indeed it be not quite self-evident that it is utterly untenable.

“Your first and second objections to the Pauline theory, which for a time so eminently deceived us, will of themselves completely overturn the supposition that the Evangelists and Sacred Writers of the New Testament were impostors. But if these be considered insufficient, let it be answered—What object had the early followers of Christ in deceiving others, when they repeatedly declared that they neither expected nor would accept of honours and preferments, and when they looked forward to and endured with exultation the most cruel and degrading persecution? . . . .

“I have neither time, space, nor physical strength to write out my arguments on Butler. C. I., at the present time; yet until they shall be answered I can have no faith, none whatever. I am as one who in the gloom of night clings desperately to a jagged reef in the midst of a storm-blown ocean; the hungry waves surging over him, ever and anon, with their drenching spray-showers: the plunging billows showing against the opal-coloured east, as they heave up and down with foamy crests, the taper masts and full-breasted canvas of a ship that glides in calmer waters—but

whether to render aid or only heighten his despair he knows not, neither can he guess. . . .

"The truth is that I am very unwell, and cannot command sufficient energy to write with elegance or even with perspicuity. Indeed, nothing but a strong feeling of duty could have induced me to attempt writing under the present circumstances. I believe that my days are numbered, and my only wish is, to do my duty while I may. . . .

"Have you seen the refutation of *Essays and Reviews* in the *Quarterly*? The article in the *Saturday Review* on the subject certainly out-Timoned Timon for virulence; yet I am of opinion that the censures it directed against all parties concerned were very richly merited. Have you heard that the Bampton and Hulsean Lecturers of the last half-a-dozen years are about to publish a refutation under the title of *Aids to Faith*? . . .—Believe me to be, my dear C\*\*\*\*\*, your sincere friend, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

(JOURNAL.) *Same date.* "I worshipped in St. L——'s. There was a first-rate anthem, with bass solo, treble solo, duets, trios, and hallelujah chorus. I read *In Memoriam*, and enjoyed the usual 'luxury of contemplation.' Walked in the afternoon to 'Swiss Valley.' Weather very fine."

(JOURNAL.) "*April 3, 1861.* . . . Wrote the lines 'To G. B.' See MS. collection."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These lines (see "Poetical Works," New Edition, p.

The temporary relapse which moved him to pen that noble sentence, in the letter of the 31st March, in which he expresses his determination to seek the Truth as long as he may, shook for the moment, as he states, all his hopes of permanent recovery. Yet, although writing and anxious thinking were alike forbidden, he did not desist from either. He was not confined to bed for a single day; he still continued to stroll leisurely about the beautiful Island; to sit in the sun on the cliffs behind the house; to steal perhaps, on Sundays, as we have seen, into a church where the music was likely to be agreeable to his ear; and to pace the long white shore of St. Aubin's Bay. By and by all cause of alarm was once more removed, and his next letter exhibits him in the enjoyment of renewed strength, and buoyed up with well-founded hopes:—

LETTER XV. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Jersey, April 7, 1861.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I sincerely thank you for your kind wishes as to my health, and in reply to your inquiries, I am happy to be able to state that I am very much better than when I last wrote to you, and that I begin to entertain strong hopes of a complete recovery, *with time and carefulness* to aid me.

"I enclose G. B.'s remarks on the probability of a future state afforded by our present state, and shall be glad to receive your remarks on my 315) should be read by the light of Letter XI., on Charity as a basis of Practical Beneficent Religion.—ED.

strictures on the 'Introduction' as soon as it is convenient to you to forward them.

"It appears to me as if our whole controversy about Charity *versus* Faith has arisen from the inaccurate manner in which I was so unfortunate as to express myself in the (melodramatic, or rather Ossianic) letter which you have cited in your last. Let me now, once for all, endeavour to set forth my meaning in more lucid terms.

"My position is as follows:—*In the absence of other proofs*, the superiority of one religion over another should be tested by the measure of its tendency to promote the welfare of mankind.

"In this point of view a religion founded on the principle of Faith is inferior to a religion founded on the principle of Charity. The Christian religion is based upon many principles, among which that of Faith is undoubtedly paramount. It follows that the Christian religion is inferior to one which might yet be discovered, the foundation of which should be laid in the exclusive principle of love and well-doing; the fundamental tenet of which might be somewhat as follows:—

" 'Let those who hold creeds and those who hold none love one another so truly as not to entertain for a moment the belief that he who strives to do good—whether by the light of the "law within," as the infidel, or by the dim light of heathen mythology—shall be punished everlastingly.'

"Had the Christian religion been established on

this sublime principle, instead of the narrow and selfish principle of Faith ; and had it been followed out as such to the same extent as it has been followed out—such as it is ; then the hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, which may justly be attributed to its existence, would have been avoided.

“ It will not do to say, that, in the system of Christianity the principle of Charity is enforced equally with the principle of Faith, for the simple reason, that such is not the case.

“ The *experimentum crucis* by which, according to the Christian scheme, a man’s admissibility into eternal happiness is determined, is Faith alone. ‘ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ;’ and ‘ He that believeth not shall be damned.’

“ If it were otherwise, what need would there be of a revelation ?

“ If it were otherwise, Socrates and Plato, Voltaire and Hume, Shelley and Leigh Hunt—men whose whole lives were directed to [a] sublime object, the happiness of their fellow beings—would sit in the Kingdom of Heaven along with the children of Zebedee’s wife.

“ You will perceive, I think, that the value of this argument depends on the admission or denial of *other proofs*. In the letter in which I first set these opinions before you, I quite overlooked the

possibility of such proofs being in existence ; but since that time, as you have seen by my last letter, I have become acquainted with certain proofs of the divine, or, at least, of the superhuman, nature of Christianity, which proofs I am unable to controvert. If, then, Christianity be proved to be of divine origin, it were idle to speculate upon what might be a superior scheme of religion, unless indeed we are warranted by the teaching of Christianity itself in expecting a better condition of the world, in which the principle of Faith shall be superseded by that of Charity exclusively. . . . If this view were adopted, it would afford some colour to Dr. Temple's theory,<sup>1</sup> that the whole human race should be regarded as 'a colossal man,' always progressing from grade to grade ; not, of course, in the same broad sense to which the Head-master of Rugby has pushed his theory (perhaps more by oblique implication than by direct assertion) ; but in the sense that the type of excellence is always improving, even though that type may pass successively from nation to nation. Thus, the moral and intellectual standard of the ancients was, in many respects, far below that of the mediæval nations ; that of Christendom under the Popes was far inferior to that of a portion of Christendom after the Reformation ; and, in the same manner—arguing from analogy—the present condition of reformed

<sup>1</sup> As expounded in "Essays and Reviews."—ED.

England and reformed Germany *may* be inferior to a future condition, for which the world is as yet immature.

“ Furthermore, if this view be tenable, it will go far to corroborate another theory advanced by the Oxford Essayists, viz.,—That the various and multitudinous systems of religion and philosophy which have been in existence since the creation of mankind, or any other indefinite period, were all designed for the purpose of carrying out the progressive education of the human race, *i. e.* of its highest type; and also the theory of that deep and most original thinker, Thomas Carlyle,—That all religions, ‘even Grand Lamaism,’ contain within them a portion of truth, and that upon these foundations, rude and roughly hewn though they be, the Divine Intelligence builds up the mighty fabric of human improvement.

“ *P. S.* It is difficult, very difficult, to realize the seeming contradiction —‘I love my infidel neighbour as myself, even as God loveth me; yet I firmly believe that he is doomed to everlasting damnation on account of his unbelief, though his hands are purer from guilt and his heart from guile—nay, infinitely purer—than my own!’

“ In fact, as for me, I really *cannot* reconcile the apparent contradiction, and I despair of being ever able to do so. . . . Yours, &c., E. J. A.”

LETTER XVI. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*Jersey, April*



11, 1861. . . . The tender solicitude for my welfare which you have evinced in your last letter, has called forth the deepest feeling of gratitude that ever thrilled my veins. . . .

I cannot thank the Controller of my destinies too deeply, too sincerely, for having granted me two such true-hearted friends as you and G\*\*\*\*\* B\*\*\*\*\*. How miserably false and shallow seem all other *acquaintances* in comparison with the strong friendships which I now possess in you and in him ! As to your hint that our small difference of opinion, now happily at an end, should in any wise weaken the indissoluble tie which unites us, soul to soul, know, that once a *friend* I shall ever be a friend, and never will nor can withdraw my confidence from any in whom I have once reposed it.

“ I may be writing sheer nonsense for aught I know, as I have got only three or four minutes to dash off these lines, all things being in a state of turmoil, my father having just arrived an hour ago. The chief reason why I write, is to relieve your mind of any further apprehensions—for such I cannot but perceive that you have truly felt—as to my health. I have not been confined to my bed, as you have surmised, but merely unable from weakness to exert myself to the same extent as usual. My father, who has been consulting our M. D. quite lately, has completely reassured me with respect to

the certainty, humanly speaking, of my speedy convalescence. In a few days I shall write to you more amply. Suffice it to say now, that I am *in theory* a Christian, with one or two minor reservations, the principal of which are, a scepticism as to the inspiration of the Old Testament *at least*, and a total disclaimer of the belief in Eternal Damnation. To show you that I am not nearly so ill as you have imagined, I will mention our intention to take a short tour on the Continent in a few weeks, so that you must excuse the omission to keep up so regular a correspondence as heretofore, during that period.

"The servant is waiting at my elbow for this letter : one word more before I close.

"Our friendship is, I cannot but think, somewhat romantic and theoretical, as we have so seldom enjoyed communication face to face. I hope it will not long be so. I hope that before many months I shall enjoy the privilege of grasping your hand and hearing your words *spoken*, not merely seeing them on paper.—Ever yours, E. J. ARMSTRONG."

LETTER XVII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Jersey, May 5, 1861. . . . In the sublime narrative of [the] Passion it is recorded, that the Centurion who presided at that awful and mysterious scene, when he heard the piercing cry of the crucified Jesus before yielding up the ghost, gave utterance to the sudden conviction of his heart,—‘Truly this man was the

Son of God.' It is probable that this officer was acquainted with the leading incidents of the Messiah's public ministration ; and it is very possible that, at the moment when the veil of the Temple is said to have been rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and many of the dead to have arisen from their graves, these leading incidents flashed across the man's mind in rapid and vivid succession. It is most likely that his conviction sprung from a momentary recapitulation of what he knew of the blameless conduct, the noble precepts, the wondrous works, the benevolence, beneficence, and extraordinary piety which make up the chronicle of those 'sinless years that breathed beneath the Syrian blue.' The Roman Centurion, born in a distant land, the inhabitants of which he had good reason to be proud of ; educated in the worship of a multitude of gods, the deifications of his own several passions and propensities ; and accustomed from his earliest childhood to look upon the theocratic institutions of the Jews with a contempt closely bordering on disgust ; this man believed, in effect, on the Lord Jesus Christ : and we have the most indisputable authority for affirming, that, as a believer, his soul was saved. Yet the Centurion would have scoffed, doubtless, at the idea of Jehovah being the only one God—for he believed in the polytheistic mythology ; of the Jewish law, with all its revolting ceremonial, having been delivered in thunder from

Mount Sinai—for he acknowledged no laws but those of his country's legislators; or of a bodily Resurrection—for he looked forward, as Plato and Cicero did before him, to a life of the soul after death without the accompaniment of the body, which he regarded as 'a hindrance, rather than a help, in the acquirement of knowledge,' or 'absolute truth' (*see* PLATO. *Phædo.* § 26), without which acquisition real excellence was considered unattainable. But, notwithstanding his ignorance or scepticism with respect to the great body of doctrines comprised in the Hebrew sacred writings and in the preaching and teaching of the Christ, he believed in the divinity of Jesus; and, having done so, his salvation is guaranteed by the solemn asseveration of one of the greatest of the followers of Jesus (*Acts* xvi. 31 *et seq.*)

"Now, let us suppose this Roman officer to have been introduced into the company, and to have listened to the conversation, of one of the primitive Christians; and to have been informed by him of the world's creation in six natural days; of the fall of man's whole race in consequence of one man's sin; of predictions relating to a Redeemer from the curse incidental to that sin,—a Redeemer who should, as God himself in man's form, purchase man's forgiveness by the price of his human blood from God himself; and, in brief, of the unnumbered mysteries and incomprehensibilities with which the

Mosaic and Christian theologies abound. What may we suppose would be the manner in which he would receive this intelligence? With implicit and immediate faith—(like the ‘stricken’ in the Irish and other ‘Revivals’); or with careful investigation and patient inquiry? With the former, perhaps, if he were a man of quick impulses and superficial judgment; but with the latter, beyond the possibility of a doubt, if he were a man accustomed to think rationally, or if he were one who had been used to the disputations of the philosophical schools which were rife during the reign of Tiberius; in which case, however his views might become modified afterwards, he would in all probability at first sight have regarded these strange stories as nothing better than ‘the extravagance and crazy rimbaldry of fancy,’ and dismissed them with a *credat Judæus*, till satisfied of the strength of their claims to credibility.

“Like the Centurion, I cherish a deep conviction that Jesus was truly ‘the Son of God.’ I am convinced that he and his immediate followers were empowered by the Supreme Being to perform miraculous deeds, and to promulgate doctrines and principles calculated to raise to its highest possible elevation the moral character of the human race. But, as regards all the rest, I confess that I remain in utter darkness. Yet, I do not on that account in the least despair; because this uncertainty may be

(and I half believe it is) the result of my profound ignorance ; and it may be ere long dissipated entirely by the growing light of knowledge. Nor am I in the smallest degree apprehensive of the consequences that may ensue from a bold and fearless, and not the less cautious and reverent, investigation of the grounds for admitting certain doctrines and opinions, before I come to believe that I peril my salvation on their repudiation or reception. The Roman Centurion, before believing without reservation in the law, the prophets, the hagiographa, and the apostolic revelation, must first become thoroughly versed in these writings and their history, and then fully satisfy himself as to their authenticity, rationality, credibility, and the binding necessity of their universal and unquestioned belief.

“This is my apology for presenting to your notice the following synopsis of my views on the subjects of Inspiration and the Eternal Punishment of the Wicked.

“I. It by no means follows that if all the accounts concerning miracles and signs given in the New Testament are admitted to be authentic, all the accounts contained in the Old Testament must be equally true. If I find a difficulty in believing, for example, that Christ’s assertion ‘I and my Father are one’ is consistent with the cry of despair that burst from his lips when writhing in

the death-agony, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'—I find a much greater difficulty in reconciling the apparently antipodal assertions of Science in the nineteenth century, and of the Mosaic records of prehistoric cycles. If, *perhaps barely avoiding the sacrifice of reason*, I can strain my imagination so far as to enable me to give credence to the story of the 'cloven tongues as of fire,' the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, and so forth; which I could *never* believe, were it not for certain considerations that overbalance the improbability of these stories; yet, until I become conversant with similar considerations of weight sufficient to counterpoise the improbability of such narratives as those of the Passage of the Red Sea, or the Resurrection of Dry Bones recorded in Ezekiel, of course I cannot conscientiously assent to the theory of their truth.

"You may possibly be somewhat startled by the words which I have underlined; but I do not consider that I have written them unadvisedly. For, although I allow the probability on the side of Christianity to be very strong, indeed so strong as to want little of being in every point unanswerable; still I am as yet by no means completely satisfied whether the probabilities on the opposite side be weaker or otherwise. When I reflect upon the long and fearful array of preposterous and disastrous delusions in practical matters—not to speak of re-

ligious delusions, a mere list of which, says Mackay,<sup>1</sup> would alone be sufficient to occupy a volume,—I really am at a loss to know what to believe. This dissatisfaction is, without doubt, the result of ignorance,—of ignorance whether or not it may be possible to admit the extraordinary phenomenon of the appearance of a small body of self-deluded impostors, whose several testimonies concerning the new religion which they introduced in most points coincided, and whose energies and indomitable perseverance have built up the stupendous system that has hitherto resisted successfully the shock of ages. Nor can I, moreover, in my present state of ignorance, foresee whether an investigation may lead me to a conclusion favourable or unfavourable to Christianity—*i.e.* to all the credenda of Christianity; though, judging from what has passed within the last few weeks, I am inclined to predict that the balance of probability is on the side of the latter. My dear friend, it is a bitter confession, but *ignorance* and *pride* have been and are still my misleading *ignes fatui*. There is no use in attempting to brave it out, and to drown the still, small voice of conscience by trumpet-flourishes of school-boy rhetoric. The truth shall be told. . . .

“To return to the question at issue.

“If it be conceded that the New Testament is

<sup>1</sup> “History of Popular Delusions,” by Dr. Charles Mackay.  
—ED.



true in all its statements, then (we hear it asserted) it will follow from a well-thumbed passage in Timothy (iii. 16) that all the sacred writings are true also in their minutest details. At present, however, I cannot assent to this. For the words of the Apostle are these,—‘ All scripture is given by inspiration of God ;’ from which I do not perceive it to be a necessary consequence that ‘ all scripture’ must be strictly in accordance with truth in its statements, unless it be proved that the idea of inspiration is coëxtensive with the idea of unerring veracity. On the other hand, if it be not conceded (nor can I at present perceive any very cogent reason for the concession) that the New Testament histories are infallible in their details, it will plainly be the duty of every unbiassed inquirer to treat the supernatural element of the Old Testament in the same manner (if with a more reverent spirit) as Niebuhr has treated the Livian early history of Rome. Now, I believe that, *in the absence of a direct declaration* in the New Testament of the complete veracity of the Old, it is not incumbent on any person to look upon the latter in the orthodox Evangelical light for the shallow reason that the Old Testament writings are frequently referred to by Christ and His disciples. Scarcely more irrational would it be, I conceive, to believe the truth of every statement, and the soundness of every sentiment, contained in the works of the Greek

tragic poets, because one of their number happens to have been cited with approbation by St. Paul!<sup>1</sup>

“*Does such a direct declaration exist or does it not?*”

“Then, supposing that such does actually exist, unfortunately, without being acquainted with their alleged refutations, I am acquainted with some arguments brought forward by Le Clerc, Newton, and others, which, if they do not prove, at least suggest, that certain books of the Old Testament were the work of different hands at different ages; and that it has been at different times subjected to the vitiating processes of compilation, interpolation, and editorial revision. When I read in *2nd Chronicles* that Manasseh built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord, and set up the carven image of his idol therein, and that in the tumults and confusions which followed his captivity, the *Book of the Law was lost*; that in the eighteenth year of his grandson Josiah (44 years after its loss) this book was found again; that it was found by *Hilkiah, the high priest, after a sum of money had been presented* to him by the king; that Hilkiah’s emissary read this book before the king, and that its contents were recited by the king before all the people, who, *seeming to have been theretofore ignorant of its contents*—(unequivocally, they were wholly ignorant of the precise

<sup>1</sup> But a sharper statement of the alternative is given in Letter of 19th August, 1863 (see below, Chap. xvi.)—ED.

nature of its contents)—entered into a solemn covenant to keep all its ‘commandments and testimonies and statutes’ thenceforward; when I read this account I find it exceedingly difficult to avoid coming to a conclusion such as the following:—As historical evidence in general is more likely to be false than accounts of miracles performed and prophecies fulfilled to be true—(this is a dilution of David Hume’s celebrated argument—see Essay ‘*Of Miracles*’); we are at liberty to endeavour to explain away such evidence by critical investigation, *if we can effect this object without violating the laws of historical criticism*. In the case under present consideration, it appears to me to be infinitely more probable that the *Book of the Law* here mentioned was tampered with by priests and Levites from the days of Samuel to the days of Hilkiah (a period, be it remembered, during which the Law was continually being broken, and which exhibits the Jews in their most recalcitrant aspects), than that the tales of the sun and moon *standing still*, the walls of cities falling miraculously at the blast of the sacerdotal trumpets, and so on to satiety, are worthy of being admitted within the pale of authentic history. Indeed upon inquiry it does appear that the Pentateuch was revised, enlarged, and corrected by Joshua and by Samuel; and that, even supposing that to be the entire work of Moses in which the circumstances of his own death are minutely detailed(!), still there is internal evidence

to show that it is a compilation in great measure from previously existing works, *e.g.* the *Book of the Generations of Adam* and the *Book of the Wars of the Lord* (*Gen.* v. 1., *Num.* xxi. 14.)

“Further: there are the different works alluded to in *Kings* and *Chronicles*. And it is generally agreed that Ezra was the compiler of these latter books (parts of which were evidently copied verbatim the one from the other), and that he also was editor of the prophecies of Isaiah and Jéremiah.

“These considerations, among others which I have not space to enumerate here, have raised in my mind certain obstinate doubts as to the inspiration of the Old Testament, in the sense of ‘perfect truth.’ It may take long years of toil and pain to clear them up—I may perish in the attempt before my time—but to persevere in my task I am determined; and, having put my hand to the plough, I shall not turn back till my strength fails me.

“II. The doctrine of Eternal Punishment is one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to the would-be neophyte, and its intense difficulty is not even denied by the Christian apologists, however they have attempted to palliate or gloss it over. Butler, apparently feeling some slight misgivings as to the validity of his argument that the objection might be urged with equal force against the visible economy of Providence, shifts his position from the ground he had primarily occupied, and proceeds to play

fast and loose with the assertions of Scripture. Stepping out of his peculiar province of reasoning from analogy, he attempts to put the difficulty aside by stating that it will melt away completely before the consideration ‘*that every man shall be equitably dealt with.*’ This is most decidedly, I think, an assumption of the whole point in question, which is, ‘whether or not it is consistent with the notion implied by the word justice,’ as an attribute of the Supreme Being, ‘that He will punish without respite or cessation those of His creatures who do not believe in a certain scheme of religion.’ Again, it is explicitly declared in Scripture that eternal punishment is the lot of every unbeliever; therefore it is useless to quote such passages as 2 *Cor.* viii. 12, *Luke* xii. 47, and others to the effect that ‘he who knew not “his Lord’s will” and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes!’ For, either the statements are contradictory; in which case one of them must be false: or else the latter class of statements must be interpreted subordinately to the former; in which case, the doctrine of Eternal Punishment remaining intact, the only modification of its severity would be the admission of different degrees of (eternal) punishment, to be adjudged with strict reference to actions and opportunities of action.

“A theological writer of the day, arguing against Mr. Maurice’s ‘theosophy,’ admits that ‘there are

few, if any, earnest Christians, combining thoughtfulness with sensibility, who have not felt this [difficulty] even to agony.' That it is felt, then, to be 'a deep and awful mystery' by Evangelical Christians, and by Infidels, Neo-Platonists, and Free-Thinkers in general to be a dark disgrace to the principles of Christ, cannot be denied. At present I feel bound to rank myself with the last-mentioned class, in respect of this doctrine. However, before I give you my special reasons for disbelieving it, I solemnly pledge myself to admit its truth and strive to believe it, provided that it shall be satisfactorily demonstrated to me, *first*, that all scriptures are literally inspired; and *next*, that, if inspired, their veracity of detail must necessarily be unquestionable. I take my stand as an investigator, no longer as a pleader. God forbid that my pride may lead me to embrace and hold fast error, when truth lies open before me!

"To proceed, then.

"In the first place, I cannot accept the doctrine of Eternal Punishment, because I believe it to be inconsistent with the declaration that God is a God of love, as well as with the declaration that He is a God of justice. With the declaration that God is a God of love,—because to produce the eternal misery of even the meanest of His creatures would be the act of a God of hatred implacable and malice of the deepest dye. With the declaration that God

is a God of justice,—because the end and aim of punishment in the hands of justice should be . . . to effect the reform of the offender ; which end is manifestly defeated by the means alleged to be employed, if the punishment be everlasting.

“ In the second place, ridiculous though it may appear, I have the temerity to believe this doctrine to be inconsistent with the analogy of nature. For we may observe among men that punishment, in order to be effective, must be administered as chastisement ; and this I take to be the great defect of the system of capital punishment, namely, that it leaves no avenue to improvement, and its only advantage, in a social and moral point of view, is the terror of example which it infuses in the masses. But it is obvious that the Maker of the universe would not eternally destroy one portion of His creatures as an *in terrorem* means of salvation for the rest—at least, if He be just and amiable [according to] our conception of these qualities.

“ Such, my dear C\*\*\*\*\*, are my present opinions on these all-important questions ; and I have laid them before you, not—as God Himself knows—for the purpose of raising doubts in your mind, but in order that you may ascertain the true state of my ever-shifting views, and that I may obtain from you whatever assistance you can render me in this dire perplexity.

‘O that I could believe ! O that my soul  
 ‘ Could trust in something, and my weary mind  
 Burst all unfettered from the dull control  
 Of doubt, that thinks it sees, but still is blind !’

But no ! I behold on one side an abyss of terrific darkness, faintly lit at the centre by a dim radiance spreading from the cross—the cross whereon that mysterious Man, who was an effluence from the great I AM, is suffering a death of torture for the eternal benefit, I would hope, of all that ever breathed the breath of human life, not to save only an elected few. On that cross I fix my steadfast gaze ; and while I hear from the dying lips that fervent prayer, ‘ Father, forgive them, *they know not what they do !*’ I feel myself strengthened in the precious hope that the brethren whom I love shall not be eternally ‘ confined to fast in fires’ because, from default of judgment, or from obliquity of reason, or even from the corruptions of their hearts, they never could obtain faith in the authenticity of Hebrew histories and poems, or in the minutiae of letters and biographies in mongrel Greek. . . —E. J. ARMSTRONG.”



CHAPTER X. 1861, ÆT. 19—.

A Visit to Brittany.—Extracts from Journal.—Passage to St. Malo.—St. Servan.—Morning by the Rance.—Vespers in the Cathedral of St. Malo.—The Bay of St. Servan.—Service at the Église Paroissiale.—“The Knight of the Rueful Countenance.”—Birthplace of Châteaubriand.—“Descent from the Cross” by Santerre.—Baptism of Bells.—Drive to Dinan.—An Intelligent Voiturier.—Rambles in and about Dinan.—Le Séminaire.—“Vœu de St. Roch.”—French Soldiers.—La Fontaine des Eaux.—Letter XVIII.: *Account of Rambles in Brittany; Question of a Future State.*—Letter XIX.: *Painful Memories; Faith in “A God of Love;” “Geology and Genesis.”*—Letter XX.: *Reluctance to Return to Ireland.*—Leaves Jersey.—Indefinite Future.

THE province of Brittany, by its scenery, its antiquities, its people, its many romantic, poetical, and historical associations had long attracted the young poet's imagination. Thither he now resolved to bend his steps, and he was accordingly busy collecting notes from all available sources respecting that interesting country. He had hoped to have been able on this occasion to extend his travels through France; but circumstances conspired to make it impossible to do more than accomplish a short journey through Upper Brittany.

Such, however, as this journey was, it yielded him a vast fund of suggestions, and abundant pleasure. I cull here from his Journal his own account of some of the places and incidents which seem to have most impressed him.

#### PASSAGE TO ST. MALO.

“The weather was gloomy, and dark mists were moving along the heights which enclose the beautiful Bay of St. Aubin’s ; but shortly after we set sail, the sun broke forth, and the clouds rolled away from the hill-tops. The steamer at first took a south-westerly course, so that we were enabled to obtain a fine view of the bays of St. Aubin’s, Portelet, St. Brelade’s, and of the islands of Guernsey and Sark, lying far away to the north, and half-hidden in the mists of morning. After we had passed the Minquiers, a formidable chain of reefs near the Island, the dim outline of Jersey receded rapidly from our sight till it became totally obscured among showers, leaving a blank upon the waste of waters, of which it is one of the brightest gems. In a short time the Breton coast came distinctly into view. When we arrived near St. Malo, the state of the tide not permitting us to enter the harbour, we steamed for a while about the Bay, and had ample opportunity for surveying the surrounding scenery. Cape Fréhel, with its two fine lighthouses, the old one and the new,—the line of bold headlands along the

coast to Dinard,—the wooded estuary of the Rance, one of the most beautiful rivers in France,—the town and batteries of St. Servan,—the ancient city of St. Malo, cinctured with walls and watch-towers, and overtopped by the quaintly-carved steeple of its cathedral,—together with the rocky islets of Césambre, Harbourg, Fort Royal, Le Grand Bey, and Le Petit Bey,—all formed a picture which it will be difficult not to remember. Swift-sailing ferry-boats plied to and fro to Dinard on water of the darkest blue. . . While we gazed upon this pleasing scene, set off to great advantage by low-fringed clouds, our eyes were suddenly dazzled by a vivid flash of lightning, and our ears deafened by a tremendous peal of thunder. The reverberations rolled away in prolonged echoes through the rocky hills of St. Michael's Bay, and the effect was grand and thrilling beyond conception. . . .

“At about half-past four o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at the quay and harbour of St. Malo, which presented a very gay spectacle, the pier and the promenade being crowded with gendarmes, douaniers, and soldiers, in great varieties of costume.

“When we were at last, as we hoped, extricated completely from the troublesome meshes of douanes and douaniers, we issued forth into the burning heat of the midday sun.

“The view from this spot was very characteristic, consisting of the massive old city-gate, with its

frowning battlements and gaily-uniformed sentries, and of the boulevards, under the trees of which sauntered groups of soldiers and civilians, among whom the Bretonnes dames, with their quaint white caps, and the priests, in their broad hats, black cassocks, and black bands, were particularly conspicuous. . . . [*Here follows a historical sketch of St. Malo.*] . . .

“St. Malo is famous as the birthplace of the renowned Châteaubriand, who always looked back upon this romantic old town with affectionate pride. He alludes to it in the following couplet :—

‘Combien j’ai douce souvenance  
Du joli lieu de ma naissance !’

He afterwards proved the sincerity of this sentiment by desiring that his body should be laid in the island of Grand Bey, within sight of the room in which he first saw the light ; and this desire was gratified by the municipal authorities, who have erected in his honour a costly sarcophagus in the burial-place of his choice. . . .

#### “ST. SERVAN.

“The town of St. Servan is separated from St. Malo by an arm of the sea, which has been converted into a spacious tidal harbour by the construction of piers at either side. At high water, passengers are conveyed across in boats for one *sou*

a-piece, but when the tide goes out it is possible to cross on foot by means of a causeway running from pier to pier. . . . We descended to the ferry, and were rowed across by a boatman grim and rugged enough to have sat for the ferryman of Orcus. On reaching the wharf at St. Servan, we were very much struck with the ancient and dilapidated appearance of the houses, as well as by the filth and abominable odours of the streets, which were filled with soldiers and officers of the 67th and other regiments. Their dark-blue coats, neat shakos, loose scarlet trousers, and tight white gaiters, together with the easy manner in which they lounged, with their hands in their pockets, gave them an air of smartness refreshing to an eye accustomed to the heavy and monotonous uniforms which prevail in the British army. The men themselves, however, were far inferior to the average English soldier in a physical point of view, being most of them weakly in appearance and diminutive in size. The shop-fronts, both doors and windows being made of glass, were generally of a semicircular form, and offered by no means a despicable show of articles for sale. The odour which assailed us on landing was such as one could not conscientiously recommend to the firm of Messrs. Piesse and Lubin. This is a peculiarity to be met with in most continental cities . . . . yet to describe the particular fragrance of this French town would baffle the ingenuity of most

men; even Coleridge himself, who has succeeded so happily in distinguishing the 'two-and-seventy stenchcs' and the 'several stinks' of Cologne, would have found it almost, if not utterly, impossible to define the subtle and unnumbered gases and fluids which constitute the odour of St. Servan.

"The fronts of many of the houses in this as well as in almost every other Roman Catholic town, are decorated with images of the Virgin and other saints, inserted in glazed niches of the walls, and lighted at night by lamps or candles attached at each side. The pious Catholic invariably crosses himself or lifts his hat whenever he passes these revered idols. We observed also great numbers of beggars, young and old, whose poverty and whose pertinacity reminded us irresistibly of their ragged brethren of the Emerald Isle. . . . .

"Mine hostess of the Hôtel de l'Union, Madame Byrne by name, is an importation from the banks of the Anna-Liffey, and retains her native brogue, though more than thirty years an absentee, in all its original unctuous purity, throwing it even into her French, and thereby making it quite *piquant*, as one of her guests facetiously remarked to us. Like her immortal prototype of the Boar's Head Tavern, she is universally admitted to be 'an honest woman and well thought on;' but I am sorry I cannot speak thus favourably of the quality of her entertainment, which would have driven Ancient Pistol into a

very paroxysm of scurrilous bombast, and reduced to the dimensions of a whipping-post the rotund proportions of that paragon of Epicureanism, Sir John Falstaff . . .

“We sallied forth to explore the town . .

“The Rue Ville-Pepin is the principal street, and is for the most part of modern construction. In this street are situated the *gendarmerie*, the *mairie*, and the *collège*, with its dingy-looking chapel. In the centre of the town, the Rue Ville-Pepin is intersected by the Place d’Armes, a spacious quadrangle of oblong form, the sides of which are well planted with elms and chestnuts. The Place was fitted up with booths, marquees, and temporary theatres, in preparation for the annual Grand Fair, which was to commence the following morning. These fairs are well attended by the inhabitants of the town and country, and the value of the articles usually exposed for sale has been estimated at 100,000 frs. (Dumaresque).” . . [*Here follows a historical sketch of St. Servan.*—ED.] . .

#### MORNING BY THE RANCE.

*Sunday, May 12.*—“I rose at an early hour this morning, which was very cold and stormy, and I walked along the Promenade and part of the road to Paris. The Promenade is lined on either side with two rows of trees, and is an agreeable walk in summer for the inhabitants of the town. Entering

the bowery shades of a *chemin détourné* on the right, after wandering through the sinuous banks starred with unnumbered wild-flowers, I suddenly came upon a magnificent view of the Rance, winding among deeply-wooded hills and downs, whose sides and tops glimmered with villages, châteaux, and lofty spires. As I gazed in admiration, the sun burst forth from his prison of clouds, and the scene was transformed into one whose varied and exquisite colours defy the pen to describe . . . ”

#### VESPERS IN THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. MALO.

“ . . Entering the town by the Porte de la Fosse, we advanced up one of the narrow and picturesque streets that converge at the Cathedral. We entered the building by a porch leading into the northern aisle, and heard the ladies of St. Malo singing some exquisite hymns to the Virgin, as is their custom in the evenings of May, the month dedicated to Notre Dame. The interior of the edifice was wrapt in the shadows of the twilight, faintly illumined by the tapers that sparkled on the high altar, and the effect of some hundreds of female voices accompanied by the low thunder of the grand organ was solemn and touching in the extreme. A reverential admiration of saints and martyrs, like all true appreciation of whatever is noble, heroic, and beautiful, is in itself a wholesome and salutary feeling ; but in the Romish Church it has been



carried to an excess as absurd as it is pernicious and deplorable. Still, while we honestly repudiate and abhor the abuse, we should not wilfully close our eyes to the influence for good which this feeling would produce if soberly and moderately indulged. Well has an eloquent living authoress observed—  
*'Sanguis martyrurum semen Christianorum!'* we may admit that the reverence paid to them in former days was unreasonable and excessive; that credulity and ignorance have in many instances falsified the actions imputed to them; that enthusiasm has magnified their numbers beyond all belief; that when the communion with martyrs was associated with the presence of their material remains, the passion for relics led to a thousand abuses, and the belief in their intercession to a thousand superstitions. But why, in uprooting the false, uproot the beautiful and true?"

"When Vespers concluded we left the hallowed walls; and, after a short stroll in the curious old streets around the Cathedral, we rested and took shelter from the rain in a Café Restaurant, while one of our party went outside the ramparts to look for a *voiture* to take us back to St. Servan. In due time we were rolled along the Sillon; and in about half-an-hour we were brought to the hall-door of Madame Byrne's *auberge* . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Jameson's "Sacred and Legendary Art."—E. J. A.

## THE BAY OF ST. SERVAN.

“.. From the windows of our *salle à manger*, opening on the sea, a very fine view is obtained of the crescent bay of St. Servan, lined to the water's edge by the antique and lofty houses of the town; the Fort de la Cité, crowning a promontory whereon once stood the magnificent palace of the Saracen Altin, who withstood there the besieging army of Charlemagne; the promontory of Dinard, overlapped by five other furze-clad and rock-bound headlands, stretching one after one into the sea that breaks in white showers of spray at their feet; and further on, the misty, dreamlike, majestic Cap Fréhel, recumbent on the shadowy waters. On the extreme right we could see the tapering roofs of St. Malo, clustering in tiers higher and higher around the elegant spire of the Cathedral, which springs from the exact centre of the town.

“After having enjoyed this delightful prospect till it was hidden from our eyes by the shades of night, we retired to rest, and were soon lulled to pleasant slumbers by the deep, plaintive monotone of the sea. . .”

## A SUNDAY IN ST. SERVAN AND ST. MALO.

“.. We proceeded at an early hour to the *Église Paroissiale* of St. Servan, the streets around which were flaunting with blue and white pennants, dis-

played in honour of the approaching festival. The Église is a plain though spacious building constructed in a mongrel Doric style. The *coup-d'œil* on entering the massive portico was exceedingly brilliant and picturesque. The lofty nave and the columned aisles were densely crowded, and the extraordinary variety of the women's Norman and Breton head-dresses afforded an agreeable contrast to the long tresses and loose jackets of the peasants, the spruce, dapper costumes of the townsfolk, and the stately forms and showy habiliments of the gendarmes. The side-chapels of the saints were all ablaze with tapers and gilt ornaments. The frescoes of Louis Dubeau showed to advantage in the 'dim religious light' cast on them from emblazoned windows near the roof. A pulpit, moulded into innumerable imageries of saints and angels, fruits and flowers, is placed on one side of the nave, but is sadly out of keeping with the rest of the edifice, reminding one of the new cloth on the old garment. The new bells were suspended beneath a canopy of white linen, fringed with roses and surmounted by vases filled with artificial flowers. Behind this canopy the high altar sparkled with lighted tapers and vessels of gold and silver. A fine looking [*Suisse* of the church], attired in a profusion of silver lace and carrying before him a glittering pike, headed a long procession of priests and acolytes, gorgeously robed, and swinging censers

redolent with incense; and the Bishop brought up the rear, in his splendid mitre, and vestments of purple, gold, and white, preceded by a priest holding an uplifted crosier, and followed by another bearing a costly golden crucifix. We had a long-winded sermon from his petticoated lordship, and the congregation listened throughout with marked attention and reverence. During the sacrifice or elevation of the Host a truly exquisite voluntary was performed on the organ, which is totally concealed behind the high altar. The moment is one of intense and breathless interest to the Catholic devotee, and priestcraft, ever studious of theatrical effect, has not neglected in this case to make the most of this powerful vehicle of superstition. Nor is the hush and awe of a vast multitude devoid altogether of a contagious influence on those whose intellects are untrammelled by the splendid slavery of Romanism. While we know not whether to laugh or to weep at the absurdity of the belief in the Real Presence, we almost find it difficult to resist a sensation of awe and reverence at the moment when hundreds of human spirits are bowed low in adoration, albeit the blind adoration of an idol. To some, I doubt not, the excitement must be almost as thrilling as that produced by the fifth act of a tragedy.

“Issuing at length from the portals of the church, we descended one of the streets diverging from the front entrance, passed by an inn bearing the whim-

sical, though charitable, legend 'Au Pauvre Diable,' and, entering the fair, were mingled with a dense throng of enthusiastic pleasure-seekers. Before us stood an elaborate whirligig covered with an awning of white canvas (not unlike the canopy of the bells in the Église, which we had just left), and surmounted by a fluttering tricolor. This master-piece of mechanism performed its gyrations with astounding velocity to the music of an asthmatic barrel-organ. The faces of the motley individuals who sat astride the diminutive wooden hobby-horses of the whirligig wore an air of unperturbed dignity and solemnity, that would not have done discredit to an army charging upon its foes. One of them in particular arrested our wonder and admiration. He was a man well stricken in years. Without the faintest approximation to a smile upon his rueful countenance, he clung frantically to his charger's neck with all the accumulated energies of his frame, imagining, no doubt, that he was about to be whirled forthwith into the vortex of eternity. The 'cranky barrel-organ' began to play, the whirligig spun round quicker than our eyes could follow it, and our hero of the rueful countenance 'passed in music out of sight.' . . . .

"Having crossed the ferry to St. Malo, we went to the Hôtel de France, which possesses the honour of having been the birthplace of Châteaubriand. It is a fine old building, and the courtyard is par-

ticularly picturesque. We ascended several steep spiral staircases to the chamber in which the celebrated statesman was born. It is a middle-sized apartment, furnished with a large and handsome bed, several antique chairs, an old oaken table, the portrait and armorial bearings of Châteaubriand, Pair de France, and a well-worn tapestry carpet wrought with figures and flowers. One of the doors opens on a small balcony, overlooking the ramparts and commanding an excellent view of the granite cross and iron railing on the island of Grand Bey which mark the last resting-place of the author of *Atala*.

“ Before leaving the Hôtel, we regaled ourselves with *café noir* ; and then we rambled about the curious old streets, passing by the Hôtel de la Ville, the Mairie, the Hôtel-Dieu, and the castle of Anne of Brittany. We then entered the Cathedral a second time, in order to see it to advantage while empty. It contains some fine paintings, especially that representing the Descent from the Cross, by Santerre, which is reckoned among the best religious pictures in France. The expression of wild, hopeless agony in the countenance of Mary, the waving folds of the drapery, and the natural position of the figure, are inimitable ; while the limbs of the dead Saviour are delineated with softness and accuracy . .

“ Leaving the Cathedral, we ascended the ramparts, from which we obtained a fine view of the

town, the villages of St. Ideuc and Paramé, and the wooded heights about the mouth of the Rance. . .”

BAPTISM OF BELLS AT ST. SERVAN.

“. . We joined a large crowd of Malouins who were wending their way across the narrow causeway of the harbour toward the church of St. Servan, there to witness the ceremony of the Baptism of the Bells. On approaching the central point of interest, we observed that great numbers had flocked thither from all parts of Ille-et-Vilaine, and the women in consequence exhibited a still more extravagant variety in their fantastic head-gear than they presented in the earlier part of the day. The ceremony may be described in a few words. An excellent string-band, hidden from view by the great altitude of the receding gallery in which it was placed, performed an overture, while the Bishop advanced in procession round the church under a baldachin of white satin. Next followed some hymns, chanted in full chorus, after which a sermon—or rather a panegyric on bells and bell-metal—was delivered from the pulpit. Then followed another very creditable performance by the orchestra and a voluntary played from the invisible organ. A litany was then intoned, after which the bells were splashed with lustral water, and Monseigneur l'Évêque, preceded by the crucifix, mumbled a

succession of prayers over them. The bells, now christened, testified their delight at being admitted within the Holy Catholic Church by giving utterance to deafening tintinnabulations, which shook the building from its cope to its basement, and set all the girls a-giggling. Then another stirring musical performance, and the mummary was at an end. . . .

“After dinner at the Hôtel de l’Union, we set off again to La Grande Foire, and there entered an exhibition of wax figures, one group of which represented Joseph of Arimathæa laying the body of Christ in *a deal coffin, and attended by two Sisters of Charity* ! ! . .”

#### DRIVE TO DINAN.

. . At nine o’clock one morning “a *voiture* which we had ordered made its appearance at the door of our hotel. It certainly had a very singular aspect, its traces being made of rope, while the huge wooden collars of the horses were each furnished with a ring of small bells, that gingled pleasantly when the machine was in motion. Our *voiturier*, whose name was Bourgeois, was an intelligent fellow, and exceedingly civil and goodnatured. In the course of our journey I got into conversation with him, and mentioned, among other things, the fact of having attended the ceremony of the Baptism of the Bells. He laughed immoderately when I told him



of it, observing satirically, '*Ah ! vous y étiez en Paradis !*' He declared that he would not miss attendance at prayers for twenty francs, but that such mummary (*mascarade*) he considered absurd and disgusting. . . I said that, for my part, I was much pleased with the devotion shown by the congregation. He replied that he set very little value upon forms and ceremonies of any church, adding that 'if the heart be right, a man need not fear anything.' I praised the justice of his remark. I confess I was greatly surprised to find such enlightenment in a peasant of one of the most bigoted provinces in France, perhaps in Europe ; and my surprise was not lessened when I observed at every cross-road a tall and elegant crucifix, with the dying Saviour modelled upon it, of a size somewhat larger than life, before which effigies the pious country-people fall upon their knees at the first sound of the Angelus-bell. . . .

"On we drove through fields of yellow-blossoming rape and blue-belled flax, and orchards in full bloom ; now catching a glimpse of the arrowy Rance ; now of some old château half-hidden amid embowering trees ; now toiling up some steep ascent ; passing innumerable little shadowy by-roads, each with its wayside cross of roughly-hewn granite ; now hurrying down the gentle slope of a valley ; now dashing through quiet villages, with their tall church-spires and crucifixes of painted wood ; now rattling along

stony roads, amid level meads hedged round by stately poplars and breathing the rich fragrance of early summer. We kept on the road to Paris until we reached the picturesque village of Châteauneuf, with its ancient castle, lofty tower, and tasty gardens. Along this fine road, on one side of which run the electric wires from St. Malo to Paris, we obtained views of St. Jouan and St. Pierre, with their crumbling steeples; St. Suliac, crowning a wooded hill that overlooks the winding Salline just before it mingles its waters with the Rance, in the direction of Pleurtuit; and the muddy and reed-grown bed of La Chiène, not far from its confluence with the same river. Passing through the pretty villages of Plou-diar, St. Piat, and Longues Vallées, we at length came in sight of the magnificent viaduct, the ancient walls, and lofty spires of Dinan. . . .”

#### RAMBLES IN AND ABOUT DINAN.

“. . The situation of Dinan is eminently beautiful. Embosomed in luxuriant vales, its Romanesque towers and its bastioned walls glitter like a coronet on the brow of a majestic steep, the base of which is watered by the lovely Rance. This river is spanned by a noble viaduct, leading from the ivied gates of the town to the opposite bank of the valley. Nestling beneath it are the quays, on which some picturesque old houses abut, casting sombre shadows on the glassy waters beneath them.” . . [*Here follows*

*historical notes on Dinan, and a brief sketch of the career of Duguesclin.—ED.] . .*

“The Place Duguesclin is a spacious quadrangle, surrounded with mediæval houses and planted with thick rows of lindens, which form a kind of square about the statue of Duguesclin. From this spot we proceeded on foot through the intricacies of some very old and picturesque streets to the Séminaire, a quaint old building with a sculptured gate which would form an excellent subject for the limner. It is surrounded by a complete labyrinth of dilapidated houses, whose gables protrude over the narrow streets, the upper stories in the front being supported by pillars made of carved wood or stone. We had an introduction to M. l'Abbé \*\*\*\*\*, one of the principals of the academy, who received us with a profusion of bows and scrapes, and brought us to a cloister from which we could see the pupils in their play-ground—a shabby-looking set, most of them engaged in playing dominoes and other sedentary games. . . .

“We visited the Église St. Sauveur, which is built in one of the most elevated positions in Dinan, and is one of its most conspicuous objects when viewed from a distance. This cathedral is a fine old specimen of the Romanesque and pointed orders, but unhappily its elaborate mouldings have not escaped unscathed the fury of the revolutionists. The view of the nave and transept,

including the high-altar on which a rich light is shed from stained-glass windows, is extremely fine; but the effect is seriously marred by the introduction of close, high, box-like pews into the body of the church. In the north transept, near the western door, is the monument under which once reposed the heart of Bertrand Duguesclin. It is a plain slab of black marble, simply adorned with an inscription in ancient French, and beneath it a spread eagle, the arms of the hero. Some of the altars are elaborately decorated. On one of them, consecrated to St. Roch, we observed a printed notice, framed and glazed, and headed with the words 'Vœu de Saint Roch,' in large capitals. The notice was to the following purport:—'The city of Dinan has been frequently subjected to calamities on account of its neglect of the worship of the Saint; particularly in the year 1660, when a pestilence afflicted the inhabitants, and did not stay its ravages till an altar was built and dedicated to Saint Roch. It is therefore the bounden duty of all Dinanais to contribute according to their ability towards the repair and preservation of this altar, lest their impiety should be visited with chastisement.' On leaving the church we observed a large stone font, of great antiquity, the carvings on which are sadly damaged by the destroyers. It stands beside one of the three southern doorways, which are the most ancient portion of the cathedral. . . . Behind the

church are public gardens, laid out with great taste, and extending to the *Hôpital* and the ramparts. We mounted on the latter, from which the view of the surrounding country is truly magnificent,—the viaduct, the quays, the silver Rance, several hundred feet below, combined with deep ravines and winding vales studded with villas and embossed with crags. . . . When we had sufficiently admired this enchanting view, we threaded a multitude of complicated lanes and alleys till we again emerged in the Place Duguesclin. Entering a clean, neat-looking *café* in a street leading from the Place, we ordered *café au lait*. We were shown into a neat chamber, floored with polished oak, and containing a good bed, cupboard, table, and respectable chairs. The landlady informed us that her terms for this room, answering the double purpose of a sitting-room and bedroom, along with attendance, were only a franc a day! As we were waiting for our *déjeuner à la fourchette*, the 99th regiment entered the town, with colours flying and band playing, having marched from St. ———, about five-and-twenty miles from Dinan. The men appeared very tired and foot-sore. Most of them, too, seemed very young, and unequal to the fatigues of a long march, much less a hard campaign. Still I was surprised to see them so weary—the majority were tottering under their arms and baggage—when I remembered how I myself, when scarcely

in my teens, have walked thirty miles in a day among the steep mountains of Wicklow without feeling the least fatigue . . .

“ . . . We visited the Église de St. Malo, which was built in the fifteenth century by the Viscount of Rohan. It is a small building comparatively, and is now undergoing repairs, as well as the improvement of a nave being added to the ancient choir, the only portion belonging to the Middle Ages. . . . ”

#### LA FONTAINE DES EAUX.

“ . . . Passing through one of the ivy-grown and turreted gates of Dinan, we had some difficulty in finding our way to the Fontaine des Eaux, the beauty of which has been highly spoken of by various tourists of Brittany. Our way lay through a miserable suburb, the filth and abominable effluvia and ruinous appearance of which recalled to mind the deserted villages with which—*usque ad nauseam*—Hibernia abounds. Presently, however, we descended into a lovely valley, most luxuriantly wooded, and intersected in every direction by trim gravel-walks overarched by the interlacing branches. At the bottom of the valley is a thatched cottage; and the stillness of the scene is unbroken save by the songs of innumerable birds and the melodious murmurs of a brooklet tumbling over the rocks in a

tiny cascade. Here we chanced to meet a little peasant-boy, who conducted us through a wild, rocky, intricate path in the heart of the woods, at the bottom of the glen, to the banks of the Rance, where a charming prospect burst upon our gaze. This lovely view forms the subject of a coloured print sold at Dinan and entitled *Vue du Viaduc prise du Quai*, and I must say that never as in this instance has Art so miserably failed in an attempt to imitate the beauties of Nature. Following the road by the river-side, we passed beneath the viaduct, and, circling the moss-grown walls on the northern side of the town, reëntered Dinan by another gate, and made our way to the Place Duguesclin . . .”

He was not now able to extend his rambles, and he resolved to postpone to a later day a much longed-for exploration of Lower Brittany. I cannot, however, close the Journal without giving one more brief extract from the description of his journey homeward, which the reader will perhaps remember with interest in reading the later passages of this Memoir :—

“On the way back to St. Servan,” he writes, “we had two views which deserve to be remembered. The fine Bay of Cancale, the Cathedral of Dol, and the white towers and pinnets of Mont St. Michel, appeared, beautifully embowered in forest and cornland, from a hill near the fortress of Château-neuf: and the crimson sunset over the wooded

banks of the Salline, where it weds its waters with the Rance, gladdened the eye, and still lives in the memory, a touching emblem of the transient nature of our dearest joys, ever brightest and most to be desired when drawing nearest to their close."

This visit to Brittany, though brief, was a source, as I have said, of intense enjoyment, and was fertile in intellectual results. He returned to Jersey encouraged and invigorated, and on the 18th of May he resumes the correspondence with his veiled confidant :—

LETTER XVIII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Jersey, May 18, 1861.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—We have just returned from our little tour in one of the most picturesque and interesting parts of France . . . . Picture to yourself a half-crazed admirer of the Beautiful wandering as in a dream through majestic Norman and Romanesque cathedrals, hallowed by a thousand memories of the golden past,—romantic châteaux of the Middle Ages, dark forests, smiling plains, and ancient cities whose crumbling streets resound with the time-hallowed names of Duguesclin, De Beaumanoir, William of Normandy, Cardinal Richelieu, Henri IV., and even the great King Arthur and the enchanter Merlin; the latter of whom still sleeps here 'in the wild wood of Broceliande,' under the influence of Vivien's cruel charm; while the former reposes in the wave-kist Isle of Avilion or Agalon.



"I think you will be satisfied with this statement as in itself a sufficient apology for my long silence. Henceforth I purpose to correspond more regularly, but at present, as the weather is too warm for the encouragement either of reasoning or scribbling, I shall merely allude with great brevity to the main subject of our correspondence. . . .

"I may be wrong, but I still think you have mistaken the force of the first argument adduced by Butler to show the credibility of a future state. This argument is an answer to the objection, that the change after death seems so vast and so improbable as to be utterly incredible.

*"Fallacy of this objection shown.—*

"1. We ourselves have gone through changes which are most wonderful both in their magnitude and in their peculiarity.

"2. We observe similar changes in other creatures, changes so numerous that a library might be filled with their names.

"The states of life in which we ourselves existed formerly, in the womb and in infancy, are almost as different from our present, in mature age, as it is possible to conceive any two states or degrees of life can be—*e.g.* as our present state differs from our supposed future state.

"Therefore, it is according to a natural order *of the very same kind with what we have already experienced* that we shall exist hereafter in a state

as different from our present as our present state is different from our former.

“When this argument is stated concisely, no one can fail to detect its fallacy.

“It is argued that we have existed in states of life *almost as* (*i.e.* not so) different from our present state of life, as this present state differs from a supposed future state. And it is in strict accordance with this analogy, forsooth, that we shall exist hereafter in a state (quite) as different from our present state as this differs from our former !

“This argument will only be conclusive when it shall have been proved beyond dispute, that the change from simple matter into a compound of mind and matter is not smaller than the change from compound mind and matter into simple mind. A thesis which, I imagine, it would be somewhat difficult to demonstrate.”

LETTER XIX. (*To G. A. C.*).—*Jersey, June 1, 1861*... “In your letter dated ‘May, 1861’ (for which I return my *warmest* thanks, as is most suitable considering the influence of the present weather on the human thermometer), you have managed to set and fit a vast quantity of thought into a miraculously small frame, impressing me as I read with the pleasing illusion that I was endeavouring to unriddle the enigmatic laconisms of a logical (or rather, theo-logical) Dante. I have lived for some years in the firm belief that my brain-pan exhibited

a large development of the organ 'concentrativeness'; but if anything was wanting to shake my faith in the science of bumps, believe me, the deficiency was more than compensated by the difficulty I had in fully comprehending your ultra-Spartan rhetoric. Not until I had concluded a third perusal, and just as I was beginning to despair, did

'Meaning on my vacant mind  
Flash like strong inspiration ;'

and when the wished-for consummation did arrive, I felt a triumphant exhilaration, similar probably to that which a comparative anatomist would experience after having succeeded in restoring the skeleton of an extinct mammoth from a few of its fossil bones. Possibly, however, the futility of perusals No. 1 and No. 2 is to be attributed to an execrable German band—the Eumenides of Mr. Babbage—which was all the while persisting, in utter defiance of the laws of harmony, in the endeavour to make music out of a set of instruments in different keys. Even as, on a certain occasion, the Devil is reported to have 'quoted Genesis, like a very learned clerk,' so did I, on hearing this insane and frantic attempt to extract concord from discordant materials, reflect upon the parallel furnished by the modern attempts to reconcile Genesis with Geology. . . .

“Lest my silence heretofore may possibly be

ascribed to unkindness, whereas in reality it was the result of that 'lethargic ecstasy' which you describe with an appreciative languor worthy of a true *Epicuri de grege porcus*, making one's lips water for an ice—permit me, dear C\*\*\*\*\*, to offer you my most sincere congratulations on your recent achievement in the lists of T. C. D. . . . . I accept the omen as earnest of a brilliant future career. Heaven grant its brilliancy may never be clouded while it is yet day, and that its close may be as full of glory as its meridian, only more rich, more calm, more beautiful to look upon! I well remember the touching allusion you once made, in a poem, to a poor academical triumph of my own, one which I never enjoyed, blasted as my spirit then was by the fierce, torrid burnings of sceptical unrest and—shall I write it?

. . . . Fires which, still smouldering, have since burned low and left me—what I am . . . . And now, were the heat less intense, and were I more poetically inclined, I could compose a most plaintive elegy, outrivalling Edgar Poe in its pathos, and undoubtedly in its egotism; but, in addition to the above reasons, I am restrained by the conviction that an elegy on one's self would be far less likely to awaken interest than to produce nausea [in the reader], however exquisite such a composition might seem in the eyes of its author. Besides, I believe whining to be womanish, and I wish, if possible, to be manly. I hope that the day has for ever sunk into

the darkness of the melancholy past, when I used habitually to curse and defy my Maker . . . and I trust that henceforth my firmly-rooted faith will never be eradicated in

The Loving Power

Who rounds our broken purposes, and moulds  
The imperfect evil to the perfect good.<sup>1</sup>

And so, without the faintest shade of envy, bruised and broken reed as I am, I offer you, my dear C\*\*\*\*\*, whatever little moral support you may derive from the consciousness that my best wishes shall attend your every advance up the steps that lead to Fame's delectable abode—(for my part, my sad experience has taught me that some persons who attempt to mount those magic steps, will find to their cost that *for them* they have been constructed on the treadmill principle.)—And now for

GEOLOGY AND GENESIS . . .”

with a long and minute inquiry into which tough question, in which he taxed his knowledge of Hebrew to the uttermost, the correspondence on theological subjects was brought to a temporary pause.

The climate of the island of Jersey, and the quiet life he had led there, combined with the change of scene and the gentle and happy influences of the society into which he had been thrown; the total relief from all hard work, except such as

<sup>1</sup> Lines with which he afterwards concluded his poem “Glandalough.”—ED.

he imposed upon himself ; the absence of all trying anxieties ; and the gradual approximation to a more settled belief ; had restored him apparently to almost perfect health ; and the effects of the rude shock which his system had received from his mishap, seemed almost completely dispelled. It was accordingly thought that he might now well return to Ireland ; and he resolved to leave Jersey towards the close of June.

But the resolution was taken with a heavy heart. He had been projecting a longer tour in France. Every day that, in his wanderings, he caught sight of the sandy shores of the Cotentin from the heights of the Island, his old roaming propensity was fanned into a livelier flame. But indeed the Island itself was not without its winning attractions ; and the object of his return to Ireland was vague enough ; and there were reasons and reasons why he should regard the prospect with sadness and pain. In a letter written to G. A. C. on the 19th June, he treats, however, his disappointment and regret thus jestingly :—

LETTER XX. (*To G. A. C.*)—" *Jersey, June 19. 1861.*—My dear Friend,—I am packing up my books, with a sorrowful heart, as we are doomed to leave, on Friday morning, this loveliest Norman Isle, whose wooded dells, orchard-blooming hollows, dear old manors, and romantic crags, I shall in all probability look upon no more.—You ask me to

write on poetry ; but I have long forsaken the haunts of the Sacred Nine, and written Ichabod on my manuscript verses. For me, when love was turned to gall and wormwood, poetry passed away from the face of nature. Nor am I in the mood at present to criticise the poetry of others happier-fated than I. What then? Politics? Alas, I am a worse politician than Thersites himself, and even less a prophet than Moore, of 'Almanack' celebrity. What care I, besides, for the destinies of Italy, or of America, when I am impotent to control my own? What is Hecuba to me or I to Hecuba? Inexorable Fate compels me to return to the place which I absurdly hoped and vainly prayed should know me no more, and to which I would infinitely prefer the hottest berth in Tophet. You were in despair the other day—you are a thousand times more blest than I. . . . You can have no conception of the legion of causes which I have for detesting Dublin. Pah! the very thought of the brogue, the bogs, and the religion-mania of the place, produces a veritable nausea. My definition of the City of Black Water<sup>1</sup> is, *Concentrated stench — morally, intellectually, and physically.* Horrible! most horrible! I have climbed to the Seventh Heaven, and now I must descend once more into the lowest Hell. But I shall not 'sever the jugular veins' for all that. No! I will get a

<sup>1</sup> Dhuv Linn (Dublin).—ED.

new novel, a basket of the most luscious strawberries, a bottle of the most costly wine, a pistol, a rope, and a large stone. I have no desire to bleed to death like a 'staggering bob.' On a gloomy day I will retire to the furthest rocks of a lonely headland, about whose base the waves of ocean 'wreathe their azure smiles in ten thousand sparkling dimples.' I will read my novel and eat my fruit. I will write out an impassioned enumeration of my woes, and read it aloud in a voice of thunder, like the Genoese Saint who preached to the Evangelical flounders. I will quaff the bubbling wine; and when I begin to 'wax over-mellow,' I will load my pistol and prime it; tie the stone to the rope's end, and the rope about my neck; rehearse the articles of my disbelief; seat myself on an overhanging crag, in such a position that my centre of gravity will be with difficulty preserved by the tension of all my muscles; place my pistol's mouth to my heart; reflect once more on my unnumbered woes; think of Patrick's Close, the Coomb, and the Cross Poddle; . . . touch the trigger, and—DIE . . . Adieu! . . .—Yours sincerely (the late), EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG (Furioso)."

But the absolute pain which the mockery in this letter was meant to lighten was not to be thus easily subdued. Just as he was about to leave Jersey, his favourite companion of the mountain-days, G. B., travelled over to see him; but this



visit, welcome though it was, somehow served to awaken associations which rendered the prospect of returning to the neighbourhood of Dublin still more disagreeable ; a fact which could not but be apparent to his ever-watchful relatives. When the day of departure came, there were sad leave-takings ; as the little steamer proceeded on its course, the bays and headlands, where so many happy days had been spent, were passed amid a throng of poignant memories ; when the shores of the Islands faded out of sight, he felt that one of the fairest chapters of his life was closed ; and the trackless misty waste of restless waters around him seemed but too vivid a picture of his own vague and indefinite future.

## CHAPTER XI. 1861, ÆT. 19-20.

In England again.—Pleasant Rambles.—A Sunset off Milford Haven.—The Wicklow Coast.—Dublin.—Bitter Associations.—Proposed Voyage to the Bahamas.—Meeting with the “Unknown Confidant.”—Revival of Old Controversies.—Letter XXI.: “*The Difficulties of Belief in the Doctrine of Responsibility.*”—Growth of Opinions.—Letter XXII.: *The God of Love, and Human Responsibility; A Resting-place at last.*—Generous Self-sacrifice.—Hopes Darkened.—Leaves Ireland again.—Farewell to Wicklow.

THE new scenes which he visited in passing through England removed the cloud for a moment from his heart. The coast of the Isle of Wight; Southampton, with its effigies of Bevis and Ascabart; a glimpse of Salisbury; and again the panorama of Bath, seen on his way to Bristol; remained long tenants of his memory. A few days spent at Clifton and in its neighbourhood, and in wanderings through the streets and among the buildings of Bristol, were lightened with mirth and enjoyment. Spots hallowed by connection with so many stirring events in England’s history, and by recollections of Coleridge, Southey, and Chatterton,

could not fail to afford him pleasure. The bust of Southey evoked his warm admiration; the Cathedral, and the church of St. Mary Redcliffe (again visited), suggested many a welcome thought; and rambles across the Downs, and afar among the leafy ways of Gloucestershire, revived and stimulated his affection for the England of his early dreams.

On his way up St. George's Channel, he witnessed a sunset of unsurpassable splendour off the rocky coasts outside Milford Haven; and often afterwards spoke of the red sun poised in the west, and the lights in the heavens, and on the tossing waves with their sea-birds, and the spray as it was dashed back in crimson cataracts from the ruddy rocks, as forming one of the most striking spectacles in nature he had ever beheld.

As the next morning dawned, and he went on deck again, and found himself, in gloom and cold, off the coast of Wicklow, the old mountains in their misty mantle were hailed with melancholy pleasure. But the sail up Dublin Bay was abhorrent to him; and his heart sank within him when he realized that he was once more indeed within the city of his loathing. "Dublin," he writes, "seemed a vast place of tombs, a city of the dead; and Trinity College—ah God! how I used to feel when I looked upon that venerable pile, and remembered the high spirits, the boundless ambition, the holy and fervent passion—all dead, for ever dead! I

felt as if a sudden stroke had changed me from a boy—ardent, impulsive, full of the golden dreams of coming years—into an old man, decrepit, feeble, and plunged into a hopeless atrophy.”

During the next few months nothing occurred to lift for any length of time the weight which lay upon his spirits. His proximity to the scenes of his former pleasures, ambitions, triumphs, dreams, was a source of perpetual pain. From his home he removed temporarily to Kingstown; but this watering-place, which he never greatly loved, was rife at the moment with kindred associations, and some even more painful. And all the attendant agony, mixed with the consciousness of the extreme uncertainty of his prospects, very soon began to tell too visibly upon his bodily health.

About this time, the late Bishop of Nassau (Dr. Caulfield), who was about to proceed to the Bahama Islands, offered, with much kindness, to take him out along with him; and this avenue of escape from present torture he seized with eagerness. His parents soon wisely opposed themselves to the project; but over him for a time it exercised a pleasing spell; and the contemplation of an imaginary immediate future served at least to withdraw his thoughts from his actual comfortless surroundings. At last his physician quashed the proposition with a peremptory veto; and the visions of the coral reefs, and wild ship-wreckers, and groves of palm, and tropic

seas, which for a while had diverted his fancy, faded gradually out of his thoughts.

He now met, for about the third time in their strange friendship, and the first for some years, his constant correspondent of the previous nine months, and had several walks with him. He was not pleased with the results of these face-to-face meetings, and attributed their character altogether to his own reserve and extreme mental depression. But their intercourse led to a revival of the former controversies ; and Armstrong soon set himself to cast into writing, for his friend's examination, thoughts, which during a long period had been rising and receding in his mind, on one of the most absorbing of the themes which they had touched. The result was an essay of some length, which he forthwith sent to his friend, accompanying it with a brief note :—

LETTER XXI. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Rockfort House, Kingstown, August 1, 1862. . . . All this is an abstract of a treatise which I intend to write if I find my views to be tenable. Don't mind the atrocity of the style any more than you would think of criticising the style of a synopsis. You will oblige me, however, very much if you send me your opinion of the merits of this scribble as a piece of reasoning. If the perpetual gulf in the Forum be not closed effectually by this mad leap in armour, I despair of ever seeing it filled up :—

felt as if a sudden  
 boy—ardent, impulsive  
 of coming years OF BELIEF IN THE DOCTRINE  
 OF RESPONSIBILITY.

and plunged into the effects of scepticism are perhaps too well known and too frequently experienced to require to be stated anew. But its inevitable dangers and bitter consequences cannot be more fully illustrated than by supposing the case of one in whose mind the evil spirit of unbelief has so long usurped the throne of reason, that not only the principles of religion and common morality, but even the ordinary appearances of outward things, have become shrouded in an impervious mist of uncertainty and perplexity; the case of one before whose intellectual vision the forms of thought, which were once as distinct as the outlines of a stereograph, have become so irregular, so ill-defined, that it is no longer possible to discern the evil from the good, the light from the darkness. Doubt is synonymous with indecision, indecision with the hopeless atrophy which shrinks from all action, and the fatal precipitancy that rushes, blindfold and heedless of consequences, into the midst of perils. The universal sceptic must, therefore, of necessity, be either one whose intellectual and moral powers are so crippled as to incapacitate him for forming a single decision, or one who, when he does act, acts with such inconsistency and want of reason, that it would be hard to trace the line of demarcation between the condition of such a man and that of the maniac or the idiot.

“If such be the nature of universal scepticism, it is evident that doubt on single points is only less pernicious in proportion as one subject is of less importance than a multitude of subjects. The danger is still the same, although the degree of the danger is different. But if there be one subject of such paramount importance as to include under its direct influence all other subjects of any importance whatsoever, of a surety scepticism on such a subject must be scarcely less pernicious

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than the universal scepticism which we will deny that Religion is such a any, who give consideration to the y that scepticism upon this subject cuts all virtue, of all happiness, of all hope, of of one's life. Such is the nature of scepticism the subject of Religion. Who will assign the danger when, like an insidious plague-spot, it affects the minutest portion of this vast and all-comprehensive system?

"We walk through darkness and the shadow of death. Life itself is but the shadow of death. Religion is the only lamp to our feet, the only pilot-star to guide us on our way. If that light be darkness, our whole spirits shall be filled with darkness. If the solitary star give an unsteady and flickering light, who will answer for our safety?

"Yet unsteady and flickering that light will be, so long as there exists a single doubt to obscure its celestial brightness.

"If scepticism be dangerous in its tendencies, an unreasoning faith is hardly less so. The unreasoning believer owes his particular form of creed to the accident of his birth. It is accordingly a mere result of chance whether such an individual be one of the most enlightened of the followers of Christ or one of the blindest of the votaries of Juggernaut. If we apply to it the same test which we applied to scepticism above, the erroneous nature of this habit of mind will appear in still stronger relief. Let the unreasoning believer bring to bear upon the affairs of ordinary life the same narrow principles which he applies to matters of faith, and he will, in his universal credulity, approach almost as nearly as the universal sceptic to the condition of the lunatic or the simpleton. Unreasoning faith, therefore, should be avoided with almost as much sedulity as that perversion of the reason which is termed scepticism. And if unreasoning belief in the entire

Unreasoning  
Faith, its evil  
tendencies.

subject of Religion be thus dangerous, it is likewise dangerous in its proportionate degree when confined to a single point of Religion. But, if dangerous in a minute point, how great must be its danger when the point in question is a doctrine which is the essential and fundamental principle of all Religion !

“The human mind is so constituted by nature as to be incapable of believing two statements which are directly and irreconcilably contradictory, except by acting in violation of the reason. The man who will do so in one or two exceptional cases cannot escape the charge of inconsistency ; while he who should always act thus would be justly considered as devoid of intelligence. The inconsistent man in character approaches the fool. Every wise man will therefore avoid, if possible, the imputation of inconsistency. In the case of doctrines involving contradictions, it follows that, in order to preserve consistency, a man must either reject such doctrines altogether, or, if he receive them, believe also in every two contradictory statements that present themselves in the common occurrences of every-day life.

“The Doctrine of Responsibility involves a contradiction apparently, at first sight, irreconcilable. The contradiction may be briefly expressed as follows :—

The Doctrine of Responsibility involves a contradiction. “It is unjust for any being to punish another being for that for which the former alone is justly responsible.

“The Supreme Being punishes other beings for that for which He Himself alone is justly responsible. For,

“The Supreme Being is and always has been omnipotent. He is, therefore, and always has been able to prevent sin. He has not done so. He is consequently Himself responsible alone for the existence and commission of sin.

“He is, therefore, unjust.

“But the Supreme Being is just, &c. : which is absurd.



"This doctrine, involving, as it (apparently) does, contradictions which are incapable of reconciliation, has driven many wise men to the total rejection of Religion, while it has caused others in the case of this one doctrine to act in violation of the dictates of reason. For the Doctrine of Human Responsibility is one upon which, as upon a necessary basis, rests the whole fabric of the system of Religion, and not of Christianity only, but of every creed from idolatry to deism. A reception or rejection, therefore, of this doctrine is equivalent to a reception or rejection of Christianity and of all religions.

Necessity inevitable of either Scepticism or Unreasoning belief in the Doctrine of Responsibility.

The Doctrine of Responsibility is the cardinal doctrine of the Christian Religion.

"Accordingly, in the case of this doctrine, and, by consequence, of the Christian Religion, two courses are alone left for those who desire to arrive at truth, both of them equally false if not equally pernicious—unreasoning scepticism or unreasoning credulity.

Conclusion.

"To recapitulate. The tendencies of scepticism and of blind unquestioning belief are dangerous in the extreme. Either one or the other of these pernicious consequences must inevitably ensue in cases of doctrines which involve contradictions. One or other of them must therefore ensue in the case of the Doctrine of Responsibility. But this doctrine is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Therefore, the rejection or reception of the Doctrine of Responsibility involves either infidelity or blind credulity.

Recapitulation.

"I purpose to examine the doctrine in question in some of its most obvious aspects, in the hope of discovering whether a reconciliation is possible or not ; or (if it be not possible, as the case now stands) whether one of the two apparently contradictory statements may not be so interpreted as to tally with the other instead of jarring with it.

The subject proposed.

"I take it for granted that the historical evidences of Christianity are incontrovertible, and that the very best of 'those schemes of systematic theology which men have constructed from the Scriptures' are liable to error, and are far from possessing any claims to infallibility.

"(A.) Every human action is the effect of two causes, the immediate and the remote.

Argument from  
the analogy of  
human institu-  
tions.

"The immediate cause of a human action is a particular state of mind.

"The remote cause of a human action is the circumstance or combination of circumstances which produces that particular state of mind.

"*Prima facie*, there is every reason to doubt that man is responsible for the remote causes of his actions; because the remote causes of man's actions, being external circumstances, are beyond his control, and no one can be supposed responsible for circumstances over which he possesses no control.

"But it is perfectly certain that, by the laws and principles which are the very basis of human society, and without which human society could not possibly exist, a man is held responsible for the immediate causes of his actions rather than for the actions themselves. If a man causes the death of another without malice prepense, he is permitted to pass unpunished. If a man designedly, and with preconcerted malice, performs the very same action for which the homicide is uncensured, he is branded as a murderer, and is punished accordingly. This is responsibility for the immediate cause of an action, namely, the particular state of mind from which the action sprang into existence.

"It is not less certain that the hypothesis of such a responsibility as a criterion by which to pass sentence of approval or of condemnation upon a man's conduct, is considered, without a dissentient voice, to be just; because this is by the human race pronounced to be Justice, and other than this no conception of Justice can be realized by the human intellect.

"And this is so, be it observed, while the existence of responsibility for remote causes remains not only not proven, but even admitted *prima facie* to be improbable in the highest degree.

"Since, then, there exists in the laws and principles which form the very basis of human society, and without which human society would prove a superstructure without a foundation, an inevitable and inexorable necessity that man shall be responsible for the immediate cause of his every action; and since the hypothesis of this responsibility is the cardinal and essential principle of Justice; is it not fair to presume that the same or a similar necessity exists also in the laws and principles upon which the divine polity is founded, and that in this system also the said necessity is indispensable to the existence of Justice?

"(B.) To this argument it may be replied, that there is in truth no analogy between the laws which are the framework of human society and the laws of the divine polity so far as relates to man's responsibility. For, it will be said, in human society a man is responsible to his fellow-men for the immediate causes of his actions only; and this solely because the range of the human judge's vision is too circumscribed to include the remote causes of human action; whereas, in the divine polity, a man is held responsible, not only for the immediate, but also for the remote, causes of his actions, to a Being of unlimited range of vision, and who, inasmuch as all circumstances are under His control, must necessarily have controlled those remote causes.

Objection to the argument from the analogy of human institutions.

"Now, let it be observed, *obiter*, that it by no means follows as an axiomatic fact from the admission that all things [human] are *under the control* of [a] Supreme Being, that *all* the remote causes of human actions are *brought to pass* by Him. Far otherwise. We must allow that each individual possesses within himself a certain power of performing actions, sepa-

Weak point in this objection indicated.

rate from and independent of the Supreme Being, and that the exercise of this power produces many circumstances which have not all been brought to pass by the direct agency of the Supreme Being. That this power is not large, it will not be denied ; but that such a power, however small it may be, does in reality exist, is proved beyond contest by the fact that when a man is punished for an evil action he will avoid the same evil action in future. Now, if a man did not possess the *power* of avoiding a certain course of conduct and of pursuing its opposite, the punishment would be useless and absurd. In the case under consideration the punishment cannot be considered as the remote cause of producing the state of mind from which the action above referred to arose ; because in a thousand instances it is found that a man will choose the very line of conduct for which he has paid the severest penalty ; while men who have never received punishment for pursuing a certain line of conduct, will follow its opposite of their own free will. This, then, proves beyond controversy that there is a certain power inherent in man's nature, which enables him, of his own individual capacity, to select one course of action while he rejects another.

“ But, although it has been shown that *all* the remote causes of human actions are not to be attributed to the Supreme Being, yet we cannot so easily prove that *some*, and indeed *many*, of these causes have not been owing exclusively to Him, on the hypothesis that He is omnipotent.

“ And herein lies a difficulty which I do not pretend to be able to smooth away, but on which I would fain cast such light as would show it to be of considerably smaller magnitude than is generally imagined.

Cogency of the objection in the main admitted.

Attempt to answer the objection by the analogy of man's relation to the laws of nature.

“ We have been considering the analogy between the relation of man towards the laws of human society and his relation to the laws of the divine polity, and we have found the investigation highly unsatis-

factory. Let us now examine the relation of man as an individual to the constitution of nature, and his relation as an individual to the constitution of Religion, by which term we shall understand the whole constitution of things divine which rests upon the historical evidences of Christianity. Let us examine these two relations in which man is placed, and let us discover whether between them there exists any analogy or not. If there be such an analogy, it will not be refused by any candid reasoner to concede that whatsoever state of things is admitted to be just and true in the one case, the same will be also just and true if found to exist in the other.

“In the relation which man bears towards the constitution of nature, each of his several actions is a cause which is followed by its inevitable consequence, whether of good or of evil. In truth, by the fixed and unalterable decree of nature, the good or evil character of an action is in direct proportion to the good or evil character of its consequences.

“The good and the evil consequences of a man’s actions redound either to the happiness or the misery of the man himself. Thus, if a man’s actions be good, their consequences will also be good, and will be profitable to the man himself. If his actions be evil, their consequences will be evil, and will be painful and disastrous to himself.

“This is the irrevocable law of nature, and its truth, therefore, can no longer be matter of question. The thesis that it is also just may not perhaps be capable of logical demonstration ; but there is a very strong presumption in favour of such a thesis, to wit, the unanimous testimony of all mankind. To illustrate this statement by the nearest examples :—When a man, by drunkenness or dissipation, habitually violates the laws of his being, which are written in a character that all men may read, in a language that all men may understand, it is universally acknowledged, as his flesh falls away and his strength and energies are consumed, that the punishment he has invoked upon himself is just. When a man, on the other hand, by honesty and the upright discharge of his duties,

arrives at opulence and prosperity, and continues in the enjoyment of robust health of mind and body, we all declare *uno ore* that his reward has been deservedly won.

“This state of things is, therefore, most probably just and most undoubtedly true in the relation of man to the constitution of nature. A state of things precisely analogous will be found to exist in the relation which man bears to the constitution of Religion.

“For, here also, each of man’s several actions is followed by its inevitable consequence. If his actions be good, their consequences will be good, and they will redound to his everlasting happiness. If his actions be evil, their consequences will be evil, and they will redound to his everlasting misery.

“That this is *true* is as certain as it is that the analogous fact in the constitution of nature is also true. Why then should it be supposed that it is less *just*?

“(C.) If it is unjust in the constitution of Religion, in the constitution of nature it is unjust also. The objection recurs again in the case of the above argument. The objection is the same in both cases. What is the objection? It is this. If God be *omnipotent*, could He not so influence the remote causes of a man’s actions as to bring to pass immediate causes from which none but good actions could result? And, not having done so, is He not Himself indirectly or negatively responsible for the remote causes of human actions? But if God is *just*, how is it that He holds a man responsible for circumstances for which He Himself and He alone is responsible? How can a just being punish another for deeds that are his own?

“(D.) We are compelled to answer, that *the idea of God’s omnipotence is incompatible with the idea of God’s justice*.

The only remaining alternative.

“It is our only alternative. Let us fearlessly avow the conviction of our hearts.

“We candidly admit the dilemma in which we are placed.

If God be just, He is not omnipotent. If He be omnipotent, He is not just.

"We can only reason according to the ideas of abstract qualities which we are able to form. If our ideas of justice and omnipotence be correct (and we know of no reason to doubt that they are so), then, in the constitution of nature and of Religion as it is at present, the justice and the omnipotence of the Supreme Being cannot coëxist.

"Let those who will accept the alternative, and, in open contradiction of the pleadings of their reasons, let them believe their notions of justice to be false—ay ! and, to be consistent, let them act in common life in accordance with their narrow and debasing creed ! Let them, believing the opposite of their notion of justice to be the true notion, punish the innocent while they reward the guilty, hang up the virtuous while they crown the miscreant whose hands are reeking with his father's blood ! Their sense of justice will recoil from it, to be sure ; but let them shut their ears to the voice of their moral sense—it is sure to lead them astray !

The alternative chosen by the author.

"I, however, am not of those who believe with Blaise Pascal that 'nothing is so consistent with reason as the disclaiming of reason in matters of faith,' while they also insist at the same time that 'nothing is so repugnant to reason, as the disclaiming of reason in things which belong not to the province of faith.' I never could see why those who uphold this doctrine should profess Christianity in preference to Mohammedanism, Mohammedanism in preference to the image-worship of the Polynesian barbarians. No, I prefer a bolder course. I am ready to abide by the consequences of the admission—that if God be just, He cannot be omnipotent ; if He is omnipotent, He cannot be just.

"What, then, is left for me to believe ?

"Am I to believe the Author of my being an all-powerful tyrant, or an all-just and merciful God whose vast, incalculable power is limited by an unalterable, mysterious necessity ?

“My whole soul cries out that He is just; and vile and degraded as the doctrine of original sin proves me to be, yet, if He be unjust, I am far too noble to bow before the iron sceptre of such a lord as this !

“My whole being revolts at the idea of His injustice. Never shall I bend the knee before the Omnipotent who made evil in order that *some* good might proceed out of the rotten mass, as the sweet-smelling flower blossoms from the putrid grave !

‘ . . . Strange good, that must arise  
From out its deadly opposite ! ’

Let it be once proved that God created Evil as the necessary accompaniment of Good, the shadow of the substance, and the glory and the beauty have vanished from the face of things for ever ; all the soul-entrancing harmonies of the universe, before so exquisitely modulated, have at one fell stroke become for ever jangled, out of tune and harsh. Religion, the true reed of Prometheus, tipped with the fire of Heaven, will be quenched in floods of eternal darkness, impenetrable and awful as the gloom of Tartarus ; and man, reeling blindly in the obscurity, and chilled to the deepest soul by the icy touch of despair, will look in vain for light from philosophy or for warmth from the affections of his kind.

“ Must we confess, then, that God is not omnipotent ?

“ The answer is a simple one. *He is bound by laws and by necessities even as we ourselves.* It is *impossible* for God to lie. It is impossible for God to sin in the smallest degree. The statement, then, that ‘ with God all things are possible,’ must be taken as a glowing Oriental hyperbole, with such as which the Scriptures abound, expressive of the vastness and transcendency of the divine prerogative. His power passes human conception, it is true, and can only be expressed by human lips in the language of exaggeration ;

‘ Non tamen irritum  
Quodcunque retro est, efficiet, neque



Diffinget infectumque reddet,  
Quod fugiens semel hora vexit.'

He cannot make virtue be impurity ; He cannot make Good be Evil ; *He cannot make Evil to be Good in any wise.* Grant this, and the theory of His omnipotence falls to the ground, exposing in its prostration the hideous lineaments it concealed but ill beneath the purple of its pride.

"Behold, a light among the darkness, a light which promises to increase more and more unto the perfect day !

The mysteries,  
which before  
were veiled, are  
now brought  
into clear light.

"Let us leave to the so-called 'Elect' to hold, along with the poets and essayists of infidelity, that God enacted, six thousand years before Ignatius Loyola, the execrable law, 'There shall be evil in order that good may come of it?' Let us rather cling to the more natural, and withal more humanizing, belief that the principle of Evil exists, and has existed despite God's efforts to eradicate it. He cannot make evil to be good in any wise. But Evil broods over this beautiful world, a gigantic and terrible shadow. More than half the world labours under its deadly influence. As the roseate hues of the setting sun flush the foamy billows of a torrent sea—one side of the wave blushing like the sky at dawn, the other, fronting the approach of night, pale and livid as a corpse's face—even so, in the tempestuous heavings of the human soul, the glorious light from heaven serves but to show more clearly the death-like gloom of hell. But though He is yet unable to destroy the Prince of the Powers of the Air, yet will the Father of All Good stay his fell ravages by His mighty arm, and war with him even unto the death.

"He cannot crush, but He will repel our common foe ! Hence the earnest story of His love, hence the sacrifice of His own dear Son ! That which was before the deepest mystery in the creeds is now a mystery no longer. For what need were there, if He were all-powerful, that He should immolate His well-beloved to accomplish a purpose which the mere

volition of an omnipotent Being would have compassed of itself—the delivery of mankind from the bondage of his enemy? Suppose Him omnipotent, and who can rob of its force the argument of Hume, that the end proposed was incommensurate with the means which were employed? The black, pall-like shadow of the destroyer's baleful wings lay heavy and death-cold on the face of the world. The whole earth was swallowed up in that awful darkness, and man's spirit waned and perished, as the form of the captive withers in the noisome dungeon. Was this the will of the all-powerful Just One? Believe it not! Had it been His will, think you, would He have been so powerless as to have needed to submit His dearly-cherished Son to torture and humiliation in order to rescue His creatures from the grasp of His foe? Never! The inconsistency is too glaring to be thought of. No, the dark and awful phantom stood there, shutting out the light of heaven from the eyes of the children of men—

A darkly-looming skeleton,  
Dilating on the pestilent air ;  
One hand was on the earth, and one  
Was pointing toward the yellowing sun.  
A phosphorescent gleam did flare  
From forth the sockets of the eye ;  
While from the teeth there burst a cry—  
' Both thou, and thou, and thou, shalt die !'

And lo! the Father who loveth us willed that the dread spectre should be laid, if he could not be shorn of his deadly might. Did He say, 'Let there be Light,' and there was light? No! let us measure the depth of 'His love to us-ward' by the greatness of the deed by which He purchased our deliverance, by the vastness of the obstacles which he encountered in accomplishing that work of self-sacrifice most sublime!

“Perish, then, the impious theory of God's omnipotence—down to the dust with the theory that would convert into a cruel

capricious, and relentless Fiend the benign Being whose whole existence has been, and is, a perpetual war against the principle of Evil, which, if He were all-powerful, His simple fiat would crush for ever ; the loving Father who so yearned towards the creatures whom He made in His own image, that He spared not His only-begotten Son to suffer death on the accursed tree, as a purchase from the power of the Evil one, whereby we also might be enrolled beneath His wide-spread and triumphant banner, in the conflict with that awful being, who would have enslaved us for ever but for Him !

“The difficulties which still remain are, it may be, hard to overcome. But if, by submitting them to careful and impartial scrutiny, we, with our limited knowledge of the true state of the case, can succeed in diminishing in any degree the magnitude which they wear at first sight, we may fairly presume that they vanish altogether in the light of the knowledge of Him who knoweth all things, and from whom no secrets are hid.—E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

The reader who has followed the course of the inquirer's speculations, will have observed that he had, at an early stage of them, evolved the notion of a benign Being, of stupendous yet limited powers, urging a perpetual conflict in the universe against a spirit of evil—in effect, a notion akin to that of the Manichees, and something very like which will be found to underlie the Christian theology, to appear in the story of Prometheus, and to haunt many, perhaps most, theological systems. He had accepted this theory, as to him the most satisfactory solution of the mystery of good and evil, happiness and pain ; had personified the principle of Good ; and clung to that as to the God of his

childhood. With this anchorage, he had set himself to examine impartially, and as thoroughly as opportunity allowed, the evidences of Christianity. Thinking and discussing in all his walks and saunterings about Jersey, in the winter and spring of the year; ransacking the little Public Library of St. Helier for every smallest atom of illuminant matter he supposed it likely to contain; communicating his thoughts at every stage of his progress to his friend G. A. C., and receiving and sifting the latter's comments upon them; he had satisfied himself (and the two or three others who participated from time to time in the discussions had satisfied themselves) that the story of Christ's life at least rested upon a sure historical basis. Furthermore, the same anxious inquiry had convinced him that the testimony of the writers of the Four Gospels was in the main trustworthy, and had thereby confirmed the opinions towards which the reader has found him approaching in the little essay, written in the September of 1860, which he entitles "A Baphometric Fire-Escape." Thus, accepting the moral doctrines of the Four Gospels as of divine origin, and Christ as an emanation of the Divine Mind, he considered himself bound in reason to act as far as possible in conformity with those doctrines in the main, and to revere the teaching of that divine Evangelist. But the theological difficulty remained still unsolved, and several of the doctrines

themselves still seemed irreconcilable with one another and with his conception of an omnipotent and benevolent Creator. We have seen from his letter of the 5th May how he hesitated to commit himself to the doctrine of Eternal Punishment; the doctrine of Responsibility, which is involved in it (but which does not of course necessitate it), was an additional stumbling-block; and the existence of Evil still continued to constitute another. To explain these by some theory of the nature and power of the Deity seemed necessary, if the Gospels and the story of Christ were to be believed in their entirety; and the above "wild leap in armour" was taken, as we have seen, however hopelessly, with this intent.

That the result was far from satisfactory to himself, his next letter will show.

LETTER XXII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Saturday, August —, 1861.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—As my time is much occupied at present, I can only afford to write a very few lines to you on the subject of your last. I agree with many of your remarks on my abortive theory, while at the same time I must say that in many parts of your critique, besides its conclusion, your reason has veiled her face, raising her voice most lustily all the while—but harmlessly, as the voice of Snug the Joiner beneath the lion's skin. However, as we now agree in the main, it may be perhaps expedient to let the controversy drop for

the present. If you wish it, I shall, when at leisure point out the passages where I believe you have either misrepresented my statements or misconceived the drift of my arguments. Your argument moreover, starting from the premise that 'a constraint from within is no proof of weakness,' I consider fallacious. If the 'constraint from within' be so powerful as to be tantamount to a necessity, over which there can be no sway exercised surely it is an incontestable evidence of weakness. Let it be once proved that a being is absolutely unable to refuse allegiance to a 'constraint from within,' and the conclusion that such a being is not omnipotent will follow inevitably.

"I think the cardinal error of my argument is this:—I have twisted the words 'It is impossible for God to sin' into a declaration that God is absolutely unable to commit sin in spite of Himself. Whereas, I believe the true meaning of the words to be, "God is so perfect that His will can so influence His conduct as to render the commission of sin by Him an impossibility.' How unreasonable to suppose that the Omnipotent, if *He willed it*, could not commit sin! The great glory of His perfection is not that He *cannot* sin, but that, having the power to do all things, He yet *does not* sin.

"The gulf still yawns, never to be closed. My theory demands for its support a relinquishment of the claims of the Divine Being to omnipotence and

omniscience, [the] two transcendent qualities which can alone perhaps command our awe. I have almost determined to abandon speculation for ever, and to tie down my attention to the practical lessons of the Gospel. Very soon after I posted the obnoxious abstract, I was sorry that I had opened the question at all, as being irrelevant and frivolous. I firmly intend to abide by the following conclusion to the end of my days :—

“If the truth of Christianity be established by *incontrovertible historical evidence*, it is the duty of every man who is acquainted with such evidence to believe Christianity, without raising a question as to its authenticity on the ground of internal discrepancies. We are taught by Christianity that God is just, omnipotent, and omniscient. We, with our circumscribed range of intellect, cannot reconcile these qualities in the character of God, such as we conceive it to be; but, unless we are able to overturn the historical evidence of Christianity, we are in duty bound to believe the statement, supported as it is by unimpeachable authority. I may be wrong, but I imagine this course to be quite consistent with Reason, and I fail to perceive or to comprehend why that petulant and rather arbitrary goddess should ‘veil her face behind her wings’—like Shelley’s Panthea—in acknowledging the state of the case to be thus.

“Might it not be well, my dear C\*\*\*\*\*, if we,

were to correspond in future on poetry, art, or literature to the exclusion of religion? With regard to the latter, the way of our duty is now, I think, plain before us. Believing the New Testament to be the work of divinely-gifted authors, we must study it again and again, interpreting by its light the open book of Nature and the writings of the Hebrew prophets and historians. Henceforth to us religion must become individual, influencing *the practice of our lives*. In my case, I confess, there is much to be done yet before I can feel that I have profited by its study. Yet I have got what seems to me now the one thing needful—we all have that now—it is but ‘a circle on the ground just where our feet should planted be ;’<sup>1</sup> but it is sufficient, *amply sufficient*, for our guidance.—E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

With this letter the correspondence on these brain-racking themes was suffered to drop, as he suggested ; and was not again resumed until many months had passed, and the circumstances of his life were completely changed. During the interval the resolution which he had recorded, to abide by the ethical doctrines of Christianity, was steadfastly observed ; and the remaining difficulties, which

<sup>1</sup> A line, slightly modified, from a remarkable poem, named the “Mystery,” bearing the signature “Orwell,” which had appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* of August, 1860.—ED.



would recur to his mind again and again, were calmly and gently put aside.

Some fixity of belief was indeed a boon at this juncture. As the autumn advanced, he once more felt his renovated strength severely tried. But the fair and lofty ambition of his life was about to be checked almost unexpectedly, and apparently beyond all hope of its successful prosecution.

It is unnecessary to explain the exact nature of the circumstances which now made it appear to him an absolute duty to devote himself with all speed to a life of drudgery of a kind the most uncongenial and the most abhorred. They righted themselves some time later on, and in a way (long anticipated) which would have made it possible for him to have devoted the remainder of his days, undisturbed, to his darling objects, the acquisition of knowledge, and the easing of the heart and the exercise of imagination in song, and this, if he had willed it, among the most pleasing surroundings. But their pressure upon him at this moment was beyond measure severe.

Before the month of September had gone over, he had resolved to return to Jersey for the ensuing winter, and there to labour in such a manner and with such a purpose as his own letters will soon explain.

After an unusually painful parting with his parents, who, with anxious forebodings and bitterest

disappointment, committed him to the life which he had deemed it right to select, he set off, with a single companion, about the beginning of October. In his letters to his friends he strove for a time to make light of this departure and change of aim, for he always endeavoured to extract enjoyment, as long as he could, out of his severest pain. But the lines which he wrote on the occasion, and which are known to readers of his poems as a farewell "To Wicklow," exhibit somewhat more accurately the nature of his misgivings and regrets :—

“ Adieu, sweet country ! O'er the roaring deep,  
 By the wild tempest on the billows borne,  
 A waif of youth, I go : and I could weep  
 With childhood's tears to see thee, this fair morn,  
 Thy dark peaks lit with blushes of the dawn,  
 Thy rough shores beaten by the whitening main,  
 Thy lowland paradise of grove and lawn  
 Encinctured in a bow of jewelled rain ;  
 For I may look upon thy face no more  
 For many a rolling year. Ah me ! how oft,  
 By thy wild rivulets and flowery dales,  
 Thy broken chapels and thy crumbling towers,  
 Thy grand old hills and solitary vales,  
 Have I in childhood wandered, in the hours  
 Of summertime, with those I hold most dear—  
 My father, mother, sister—on thy shores  
 Now lingering, as they watch the labouring bark  
 That bears me from them fade away and pass  
 Into the melting blue of sea and sky !  
 How many a time, ye mountains, have I climbed  
 Your craggy sides, when boyhood's hope and love

Glowed on my cheek and beat within my breast !  
How many a time, ye peaks and cliffs, have I,  
With my own brother, and the friend beloved  
Even as a brother, while the breezy morn  
Mantled our rosy faces, and the dew  
On heath and harebell brake about our feet  
In spangled showers,—how oft have we, your bald  
And hoary summits scaling, wearily  
Reposed us on a couch of honeyed flowers,  
Amid the war of tempests, and the screams  
Of the wild eagle, and the thunderous roar  
Of cataracts channelling the vales below,  
The while we carolled an old mountain lay,  
Or shaped our visions of the coming years !—  
Ah, happy hours for ever flown,  
For ever flown ! . . . ”

Words to which he added his own comment in  
later years—

“ My country, I have left thy fairy shores,  
With broken health and shattered hopes, and cried  
Babe-like, while waisted from thy mother-arms,  
And shaped my sorrow into words like these !”

## CHAPTER XII. 1861, ÆT. 20—.

Letters XXIII. and XXIV. : *A Mournful Parting ; Dublin Bay ; Wicklow Coast ; A Gale off Land's End ; Falmouth ; Coast of Cornwall ; Plymouth, &c. &c.*—A Gale off the Channel Islands.—In Jersey again.—Painful Contrasts.—Letter XXV. : *A Dismal Prospect ; Gloomy Reflections.*—Letter XXVI. : *Study of Burke.*—Health completely reëstablished.—Letter XXVII. : *Hope Revived.*—Catastrophe averted.—Brightening Prospects.—Letter XXVIII. : *Jersey Coast-Scenes.*—Letter XXIX. : *Death of the Prince Consort ; Change in Literary Tastes.*—Work done in 1861.

**B**UT, as I have said, he wrote with an apparently light heart to his friends ; and the pleasure of travel, and the elation imparted by the gales which he encountered on his way, yielded him a momentary respite ; and the following extracts from his letters give a gay narrative of his journey in his own words :—

LETTERS XXIII. and XXIV.—“*Jersey, October, 1861. . . .* We left that gloomy Limbo, the port of Dublin, in the *Leda* screw-steamer, on some day towards the end of last month [September]. The sea was rough and furrowed with ‘white-horses’ even inside the wild, romantic bay, as it had blown a heavy equinoctial gale the preceding night. We bade

adieu to our friend G\*\*\*\*\* B\*\*\*\*\* just before the steamer left her moorings among the dark mast-forests of the port. We watched him with straining eyes till he was lost among the crowds of porters and cabmen that throng the North-Wall ; and when we could see him no more, a sense of desolation came upon us and depressed us in a manner that I cannot describe. We looked up to the grand, sombre mountains that frown majestically over the plain, the city, and the darkling bay, and with a pang of keen agony we recalled the happy days we have spent among those wild glens, bare peaks, gloomy tarns, and solemn woods, with the friend of our childhood and of our ripening youth, now perhaps separated from us for ever. The beauty of Dublin Bay is no doubt grossly exaggerated by those patriotic enthusiasts who compare it [conventionally] with the Bay of Naples. Anybody possessed of the slightest discernment will at once perceive that it is not less absurd to institute a comparison between the rich cerulean colours, the eternal sunshine, the splendid orange-groves and statues of Naples, and the gloom, the sternness, the melancholy grandeur of Dublin Bay, than it would be to compare a Spanish Boy of Murillo with a Brigand Chief of Salvator Rosa. But there is an inexpressible charm about the fantastic and weird outlines of the Wicklow Mountains, the dark-green waters of the seldom tranquil Channel, the rugged brown steeps

of Howth, Lambay, and Ireland's Eye, and the bleak, far-stretching expanse of plain, in the midst of which rise the time-worn towers and steeples of the city of the Black River. A pervading sense of melancholy is the *genius loci*; and on a gloomy day one might fancy, when sailing out to sea, that he was being borne across the murky Styx in the skiff of Charon to the regions of eternal night.

"We passed rapidly by the magnificent coast of Wicklow, and amused ourselves by recounting the unnumbered [incidents] of by-gone happiness that every well-known peak, or valley, or mountain-glen suggested to our memories. And here, if I had time to spare, I would borrow a leaf from 'Yorick,' as I have much to say about those dear old hills, and the sweet thoughts which the contemplation or the remembrance of them evokes in me. But I cannot write a 'Sentimental Journey' just now. . . . .

"As we sailed beside the bold coast of Wexford, the night began to approach, and the storm gradually rose to what might without exaggeration be termed a tempest. We soon turned in for the night, and were rocked to sleep. . . . .

"Next morning, at about six o'clock, we both awoke simultaneously, and found ourselves rolling over one another on the floor like porpoises. We immediately scrambled on deck, as best we could. . . . We were in the Atlantic, and it was a storm—on the borders of the Atlantic, in the midst of a

terrific gale ! Dim, cold, and dreary, like the shadow of a spectre under a midnight moon, rose the crags of the Cornish shores on our left ; and on every other side stretched the boundless ocean, rolling in huge cataracts of dark-green waters, and spouting in the misty air torrents of spray. Our vessel was tossing like a cork upon the giant waves, which broke against her prow from time to time, covering her decks from stem to stern with sheets of seething foam. We found it quite impossible to keep our feet. \*\*\*\*\* rolled about the deck like an empty cask, and at last was obliged to grasp at a rope's end with all the accumulated energies of his frame. I staggered into the cook's room and sat cheek-by-jowl with the man of pots and pans ; lit my cigar, and smoked away like an Epicurean deity ; while the cook entertained me with a stupid yarn about an old woman and a jackass—when, suddenly the ship gave a tremendous lurch, and a topper came dashing right across decks, breaking into the cook's room and sousing him and me, while it fizzed and bubbled and steamed among the hot pots and pans, dislodged me from my comfortable seat, and precipitated the ancient cook right in my face, thereby annihilating my cigar completely. . . .

“ . . . The Lizard projects in a southerly direction as one of the horns of Mount's Bay. It is surmounted by a fine lighthouse, which rises like

alabaster from the 'killas,' or slaty soil, for which the Lizard district is famous. *En passant*, I may observe that the name 'Lizard Point' has no reference whatever to the beautiful reptiles which we have amused ourselves by disturbing from their repose on the sunny slopes of Noirmont or Val des Vaux. On the opposite coast of Brittany there is a corresponding point called 'Lézardrieux.' On both this and Lizard Point, says Mr. Jephson, in his work on Bretagne, are found a great number of rope-walks and rope-makers. In the Middle Age the trade of rope-making used to be exclusively carried on by lepers, who were only permitted to ply their trade in solitude. Lepers used to be called 'Lazars,' from Lazarus, the beggar whom Dives maltreated. Hence Lézardrieux and Lizard or Lazar's Point.—While we were doubling the point we got a fearful tossing, but on coming round by Hell Mouth and Black Head we were in comparatively smooth water. The coast here is very bold, and the waves, leaping up the sombre crags and pouring in white cascades down their dark fissures, together with the red glare of the slanting sun upon the foam, produced a magnificent effect. It was half-past five o'clock when the *Leda* steamed round the headland which is crowned by Pendennis Castle, and turned into the entrance to Falmouth Sound. We were ravenously hungry, in consequence of the sea-air, and the impossibility of breakfasting



or lunching on board by reason of the roughness of the sea. Falmouth looked very pretty in the evening light, rising in terraces from the sea after the Continental fashion—‘and thoughts of bacon rose.’ . . We passed between crowded sails of small craft and large, from the man-of-war to the tiny cutter, and cast anchor in the roads about a mile from the shore. The church-bells of Cornwall were ringing for evening service, and their melodious chimes came borne to our ears through the falling storm, as we stept into the row-boat that brought us ashore. We felt like the Ancient Mariner, when he hove in sight of his native land—

‘The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,  
That stands upon the rock :  
The moonlight steeped in silentness  
The steady weathercock.

‘The harbour-bay was clear as glass,  
So smoothly it was strewn !  
And on the bay the moonlight lay,  
And the shadow of the moon.’

“We leaped on land, and hurried off to a hotel. And there, my friend (you’re an *Epicuri de grege porcus*, so I may tell you), we had *such* a dinner ! . . Commend me to the cookery of Tre, Pol, and Pen ! . . .

“We sallied forth in the darkness to see the town of Falmouth by lamplight. After wandering for an hour or so among scrupulously clean streets,

prim Cliftonian terraces, and old churches, we retraced our steps wearily to the ferry, embarked in a row-boat, and were conveyed back to the steamer. Got on board, smoked a cigar each, and tumbled in. Slept soundly till seven o'clock in the morning. Were informed by the Captain—(into whose best graces I got by lending him *Night and Morning*, to read while we were ashore)—that it blew a terrific storm in the night, and it was well that we were not out at sea. Got on deck, smoked our cigars as we gazed upon the surrounding scene,—Falmouth, Pendennis Castle, St. Anthony's Light, the Swanbrook, and the wooded bluffs and hills around the haven. Walked up and down the quarter-deck for three hours, starving, and hankering after the coming breakfast. Weighed anchor at 10 o'clock, and sailed gloriously out of the Sound, the fresh breeze sitting in our canvas, and the warm sun glittering on the foamy water. A most enchanting morning! . . . By [the aid of a field-glass] as we cruised along, we could distinguish the town of St. Austell quite plainly, as well as several other villages, and sweet quiet manor-houses, and castles, and country churches. In St. Austell's Bay, a fine semicircle of cliffs, crags, and bluffs, we breakfasted. The sea was so rough after the storm of the preceding night, that the cups and saucers, plates and dishes, danced hornpipes on the tables, in the *Great Eastern* mode. Nevertheless, we very

much relished our repast. By the way, I suppose you will say that I have borrowed a leaf from *Werther*, as I talk about nothing but eating. But go to sea in a heavy gale, and you will soon perceive how very highly the comparative importance of breakfast, dinner, and tea, rises in the estimation of the tempest-tossed *voyageur*. I can't (I haven't patience, in fact) describe to you the exquisite beauty of the coast, including Zoze Point, Pennare Point, St. Austell's Bay, Whitesand Bay, and the Sound of Plymouth. Enough to say, that, stretching out the rug that I stole from my cousin, I spread myself upon it, and lay on my back, gazing alternately at the deep blue sky and the magnificent coast, while the sun shone warmly above. The Eddystone Lighthouse we saw. It is ten miles from Devonport. You have seen thousands of pictures of this wonder of the world : they are all very like the original, for which I am sincerely thankful to the artists. . . .

"Having sailed round a rocky headland, decorated with thick woods, and studded with pretty tea-houses, we came in sight of the fortifications, the towers, the arsenals, the breakwater, the lighthouse, the men-of-war, the crags, the hills, the mountains, the woods, and the stately church-spires of Plymouth.

" . . We landed at Plymouth and visited, first, a chop-house, and then the arsenals, the Hoe, and

the dockyards. Plymouth is really a remarkably pretty place. Mount Edgecombe rises behind the town, which is built on as many hills, I imagine, as the Eternal City; while the Sound is extremely picturesque, with its noble cliffs embosomed in woods, its splendid breakwater, and its lighthouses. We walked about Plymouth for four or five hours, and had the good fortune to witness a review of Marines and Volunteers on the green space at the summit of the Hoe. Here we discovered that the 'Horse Marines' are, after all, not a fable. . . . We felt the change of climate here most palpably . . . .

" . . . Reëmbarked in the evening, towards sundown, and sailed at 7½ o'clock. The view by moonlight, of the lighted town, the Sound, the Eddystone, and the Devon coast as far as Dartmoor, . . . oh ! . . . .

" Turned in at 10½ or 11, and slept till 6 in the morning. Came on deck, and found ourselves just off the white cliffs of St. Alban's Head. The sail along the Dorset coast and as far as the Needles is not worth mentioning, as the shores are as flat as Clontarf, only not so like Malebolge. The sail up the Solent you know. All I have to say about the latter is, that my opinion of it has not been improved by my last visit."

All the objects in Southampton which had interested him a few months before, were now revisited; and he started off, again in most tempestuous

weather, in the first mail-steamer for Jersey, enjoying the tumultuous scene of the storm-swept Channel with exuberant delight. Having passed the Caskets, the view which greeted him off the coasts of Guernsey and Sark was magnificent ; and he was able to judge of the violence of the gale by observing the motion of another steamer, struggling off St. Peter's Port, which seemed, as it pitched, like a horse that had reared himself out of balance.

“He wrapped his cloak about him and was glad.”

Owing to the roughness of the sea and the violence of the wind, it was impossible to approach the harbour of St. Helier for some hours ; the ship cast anchor in the shelter of St. Aubin's Bay ; and it was with strange, half-pleased, half-melancholy feelings that he sat gazing there at the shores which had assumed almost fictitious beauty in his imagination.

A wild, rough, and trying week's travel it had been for him ; and yet it seemed as though physical fatigue in the open air was just the thing he was best able to endure ; and mental anxiety and sedentary occupation alone were baneful. And now he was about to commit himself to a sedentary life, and to an occupation in which he forefelt that his disappointed hopes would prey upon him like some hidden cancer !

The first few weeks spent among the scenes in which, in the earlier part of the year, he had been

so very happy—with the consciousness of recovered strength, and anticipations of the renewal of his grand intellectual labours after but a short interruption—were weeks of despairful melancholy. It was some time before he could pluck up heart to reopen his correspondence with his friend Mr. C\*\*\*\*\*, and his first letters, while they disclose the reasons of his altered plan of life, reveal also his dejection and pain.

LETTER XXV. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Jersey, Sunday Evening, Oct. 13, 1861.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I hope you have not concluded from my long silence that I have forgotten you, but if you have, let me hasten to dispel the illusion. The only excuse I can plead for not having written to you before now, is the turmoil of uncertainty and excitement, closely followed by a considerable voyage and the bustle of arriving here, all of which items are a brief summary of my personal history during the last two months. I am still labouring in perplexity and unrest—I would almost exchange my position for the boiling pitch of Malebolge. This deplorable state of things almost entirely incapacitates me for thought or action. When I lift my eyes and look forward to the future, I can discern no trace of a horizon: my prospects are all dark and confused as the pre-mæval chaos. Three months ago I resolved . . . to sacrifice ambition and the desire for knowledge at the shrine of filial duty. I am treading upon

sacred ground, but I know you, and I can trust your goodnature so far as to confide in you the secret which has cast a shadow upon my life. . . .

I never knew this positively till of late, and the knowledge has well-nigh paralyzed me. . . . You see now why it is that I cannot go on with Trinity College or take a degree at any other University. I should have to wait four years before I could take a profession. Who can forestall the uncertainties of human life? I have resolved accordingly to enter the Civil Service . . . .

"I have a heavy burden to support, and my strength fails me, and my knees feebly totter beneath the weight. . . . Sometimes I pray, but my prayers are for the most part like the prayers of Claudius, King of Denmark; and whenever I do revive the faith of my childhood, in which, by a tremendous effort, I occasionally succeed, I feel the horrible conviction forcing itself upon me that my supplications are addressed to a Being who takes no interest in such an one as I. . . . You can figure to your mind ambition defeated, constitution impaired, favourite pursuits forbidden, and a future presenting no attractions whatever, and then judge whether the picture I have drawn be overstrained or otherwise. . . .

"Before I came to Ireland in June, you were accustomed to regard me through an atmosphere of mystery and strong personal interest—if I can at all

judge of the thoughts and feelings of another. When I returned to the land of my birth, you sought my society with evident curiosity, not unmixed with the pleasure that one feels in cultivating the personal acquaintance of one previously known only by his written thoughts. You were disappointed in me. I feel assured. Like the deluded victim of enchantment in the Arabian tale, you looked for gold in the mysterious coffer, and found in it nothing better than chopped leaves. I dare say you expected to find me as brilliant, as lively, as well-informed as yourself. You found me dull, dry, barren, perhaps repulsive. I dare say you bethought yourself of the unknown confidante in Miss Edgeworth's amusing story. I read disappointment in unmistakable characters on your face, though, like a true gentleman, you endeavoured to conceal it. Well, I suppose I am a very sad dog—indeed I am perfectly certain of it; but I would fain persuade myself that, were circumstances more favourable than they are and have been, it would not be so—at least you would not have felt the icy chill which I know you felt in my company, in place of the warmth of geniality and goodnature. My dear friend, for sundry and diverse reasons, which I cannot now detail, my three months' sojourn in Ireland this year was preëminently the most miserable period of my life; and any attempt at mirth or unrestrained converse on my part would have produced an effect as dismal as music from



Memnon or a jest from the lips of Nestor. Hence my evident restraint, and the sullenness and moroseness which I often feared you would wrongly interpret into a desire to discontinue an intimacy which I prize the most highly of all the advantages I enjoy. Shall I confess also that your agreeable conversation was like songs sung to a heavy heart ; that I also was disappointed, not perceiving a stronger effort to [remove] the barrier interposed between us by my shyness and reserve ; that while my soul strongly yearned to mix itself with yours in indissoluble friendship and affection, I was discouraged by what seemed to me a misconception of my nature,—a want of perceiving that the ice which bound the current of my feelings must be gradually melted (not broken) before their flow could become as smooth and as clear as is necessary for the true interchange of thought ? My dear friend, circumstances prevented us from seeing and knowing [as much] of each other [as] we ought ; and I am sure, if I know you, that you do not regret this less than I. We shall meet again—probably in the great Metropolis of the world. May our intercourse be more frequent then, and our *personal* friendship fostered under better auspices ! Meantime, let us continue our correspondence—our friendship on paper, if I may so call it.

“I have much more to say, but I regret that I am unable to write any more at present. . . . We

have engaged two Frenchmen here. . . . They have given us Egyptian tasks for to-morrow ; and, as we played truant yesterday, and made a foray on the orchards of the Vingtaine de l'Église, we have prepared nothing as yet. I am sure you will write to me soon. Here, in this quiet little Isle, a letter from a friend comes to me like the visit of an angel.—Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

How closely he devoted himself to his new studies, his inclination to reject his friend's proposal to commence a new critical correspondence on other themes, sufficiently indicates :—

LETTER XXVI. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*Jersey, Oct. 29, 1861.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I very much fear that I shall not be able to find leisure to criticise Burke's *Reflections*, &c., although I should be happy to avail myself, if possible, of this opportunity of benefit in the study of rhetoric from one who is no mean proficient in that noble art, and who has already won honour in the lists of the aspirants to its laurels. At any other time, when the pressure of business and anxiety should be less weighty than it is at present, I should grasp at your offer with eagerness ; for I know that mine would be all the benefit, yours the thankless task of imparting information and instruction. If even I should be so lucky as to hit the mark, it would be by your guiding hand, I have no doubt,—as the bow of Paris was directed by Apollo. But indeed my lucky

hits would be few and far between. And yet I am half disposed to rely upon your indulgence, and offer you the unripe fruits of a hasty and superficial reading, after a week or so is passed, if you will agree to open the ball. . . . It may afford you a considerable amount of fun to contemplate me in the agonies of a tyro bungling over the keys of an instrument which he does not understand, and producing attempts at harmony as ludicrous as they are discordant. . . . I must see what sort of criticism you expect me to furnish from analyzing your own, before I attempt it.—Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

With time and recuperated strength, his great despondency wore away. There can be no doubt that the climate of Jersey had a remarkable restorative virtue for him, and was precisely of the kind best adapted to his disorder in its relations to his peculiar temperament. But indeed, as I have frequently said, it was habitually his tendency to make the best of things, to struggle hopefully with difficulties, and to derive a pleasure from the endeavour to render himself master of circumstances. Besides, he was but twenty years of age, young indeed, and with perhaps a long, long future before him, to mould, he felt, to his own purposes, if he could only rely upon his bodily strength. And now, once more, his bodily strength became almost perfect. He was out, before many weeks, in all weathers, as often as he thought himself justified in relaxing

from his studies, ever eager for long marches and explorations ; the wildest parts of the coast he endeavoured to visit whenever a violent storm happened to blow ; and he was soon able to gratify his inveterate love of climbing, by scaling, with the help of arms and knees, the loftiest of the crags over the sea near Grosnez, in order, for a mere freak, to light a fire on its top ; and on the 9th of November he writes thus cheerfully to his friend, in a letter from which I have already quoted :—

LETTER XXVII. (*To G. A. C.*)—" *Jersey, November 9, 1861.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—Many thanks for your note, to which I am able to reply only with great brevity. In answer to your very kind inquiries as to my health, I am delighted to be able to tell you that I do not think I ever felt better in my life. This climate agrees with me most wonderfully, and the prospect of reëntering the world of action—though in a humbler sphere than I once aspired to—fills me with energy and good spirits. When I was last in Ireland, I felt, in visiting my old haunts, like a ghost returned to the scenes of his life. Dublin seemed a vast place of tombs, a city of the dead ; and Trinity College—ah God ! how I used to feel when I looked upon that venerable pile, and remembered the high spirits, the boundless ambition, the holy and fervent passion—all dead, for ever dead ! I felt as if a sudden stroke had changed me from a boy—ardent,

impulsive, full of the golden dreams of the coming years—into an old man, decrepit, feeble, and plunged into a hopeless atrophy. Now I begin to fancy that I grow young once more, and to look forward to LIFE, glorious *life*, where I formerly saw only the prospect of inevitable death.

“With such feelings within me, you can fancy with what intense delight I read your beautiful little poem in *A*——. I really cannot refrain from congratulating you most heartily on the marked improvement, not only in perspicuity of style and definiteness of idea, but also in moral healthiness, evinced by this exquisite *pièce de circonstance*. I am only sorry to find it in such vile company. It will, I am sure, be no compliment to *you* to say that it stands conspicuous among the other contributions to the wretched little ephemeral, as Hector among the crowd of inferior warriors. . . Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

But notwithstanding this restoration to a more cheerful and hopeful mood, it was quite apparent that, whenever it came vividly before him, the thought of his altered prospects had lost little of its sting. It was a hard thing to stand by and witness one of his bright gifts and noble aspiring intellect, his gentleness, affection, and magnanimity, voluntarily sacrificing all his hopes, tastes, and ambitions without a murmur, in a cause which, however sacred, surely did not demand so terrible an

expenditure. And yet for a time there did seem nothing open for him to do, but to prepare himself with all expedition for that vocation which of all others he had loathed and detested, with an abhorrence (based on certain very natural reasons) which had grown up with him from his childhood. The constraint of circumstances was just of a kind the causes and severity of which alike it is almost impossible to bring home to the mind of a stranger; and my difficulty is, without entering into minute details, to convey to the reader a sense of its reality, and its important bearings upon the life I have undertaken to describe. Perhaps it will suffice to say that it appeared to his companion at least—and nobody had so good an opportunity of judging—to involve the probability of his total and irrevocable wreck. But he had now fairly committed himself to that life of self-devotion, and he flattered himself that he was accepting his destiny with Stoical calm; while to his companion's eye it was clear that the consciousness of it was fast drying up every fair fountain of thought and feeling which had made his young life beautiful.

A way out of this great darkness was now discovered before the end of the year, rendering it possible for him to return to Ireland in the ensuing summer, when his health would probably be completely reëstablished; continue his course of study, though more moderately than of yore, at Dublin

University; and pass out into whatsoever congenial profession he might choose. His own adhesion to the scheme suggested remained to be secured. He was hard to persuade into acquiescence. He imagined that the remedy involved too great a measure of self-sacrifice on the part of the proposer. In this he was quite mistaken, for the shoulders of the latter were broad enough to bear such a weight, as the event proved. However, after much pressure, he at last consented, but even then with a certain reservation, and a determination still to share the burthen, though in a less painful and less dangerous way.

And truly the would-be extricator was well rewarded for any little trivial pains and temporary worries which he may have brought upon himself. Surely it was more than ample reward to witness the change suddenly wrought upon that dear being as if by the touch of a miraculous finger. All his energies were awake again; all the old lively, cheerful, mirthful ways came back; the frozen fountains were all loosed; and his life was now as bright, as happy, as active, as aspiring, as in the very best of times gone by.

I am bound here to record that at this time many of his hours were spent in an effort to promote the interests of an individual, much loved and much respected, whom he believed to be, with others, the victim of the arbitrary repression of a

knot of irresponsible men in power, most of whom are now dead, and may rest in their graves forgiven. This effort entailed a vast deal of anxious and very disagreeable and painful work; and it was not crowned with any immediate success; but I have little doubt that it helped in no inconsiderable measure to bring about a mitigation of the grievances of a good many sufferers; and I could not pass over this period of his life without mentioning a very noble, if not always very happy, struggle which occupied so much of his thoughts and care. But enough of unpleasant themes.

As illustrating his manner of life in Jersey from about this date to the close of the year, I give the following extracts from two merry epistles to his friend B\*\*\*\*\*, the first containing an allusion to an old signal-man at La Moye Point, a good-natured Irish pensioner, whose acquaintance he had made in the course of his wanderings during the preceding summer; a very jovial old fellow, who used to say that, throughout long service in foreign countries, he always carried a bit of Irish turf in his knapsack, and whenever he landed at a new port, he would fling it to the ground, and, planting his right foot upon it, shout out to his comrades, "There, boys, there's Pat Renny's brogue still upon his native sod!"

LETTER XXVIII. (*To G. B.*)—"Jersey, Sunday Evening, Dec. 8, 1861. . . I am delighted to see, by



‘your communication which came to hand’ yesterday, that it is not your intention to cut my acquaintance until further notice . . . My friend, we arose this morning, being Sunday, at the hour of 10 A.M.; and, having dressed and breakfasted (‘broken fast’ is more correct), we held a council of war—present ourselves and our cat—concerning the course most agreeable for adoption with regard to the manner of spending the Lord’s Day. For a long time we debated with ourselves whether it would be more expedient for us to separate as usual, and depart on our several ways, \*\*\*\*\* to the Église de la Ville . . . and I to the Chapel-of-Ease of St. L—— . . . or to dispense with our religious exercises for the day, and take a walk into the country. At length we agreed to refer the dispute to our cat, for arbitrement, on the following conditions:—That if, on pulling the cat by the tail, that animal should emit a caterwaul, mew, screech, or squeak, between the notes *D* and *G*, we should go to church; if otherwise, otherwise. The cat decided in the negative, viz., that we should take a walk. The which, accordingly, we set ourselves to accomplish. Having, therefore, filled our pockets with corned beef, mustard, bread, butter, and a small tin canister of strawberry preserve; . . . and having, furthermore, given orders to our landlady not to cook any dinner for us to-day; we girded up our respective loins, and went our way. Arrived at mine host’s of

the Red Lion, we boarded the 'bus, and were speedily transported thereby to the town of St. Aubin. Here disembarking, we illumined our weeds, and proceeded along a lovely and delectable vale, well-known to thee, the exit whereof abuts upon the fantastic bay of St. Brelade, also to thee well known. Wending our way along the bases of the hills that slope into that exquisite bay, we came to a halt at the door of the ancient church of St. Breladius, A.D. 1111, entered, and heard a sermon in excellent French, so slowly and so distinctly enunciated that every word thereof was intelligible to us. Then, sir, we climbed round the rocks at La Batterie de la Moye (do you remember our hot climb there last June?); and after scrambling in and out through chasms and clefts in that locality, we ascended to the Signal-Post. This is the first time I have been here since we all left the Island together in June, although \*\*\*\*\* and I have visited some magnificent pieces of coast-scenery between l'Étac and Grosnez, and also Bonne Nuit, Bouley Bay, & *cetera*. Accordingly, we crossed the little garden in front of the cot, and, presenting ourselves at the open door, where the clatter of knives and forks assailed our ears in rivalry with the roar of the Atlantic, 'God save all here!' cried we, in bass and tenor duet.—'God save you kindly, whoever yiz are'—(*voice from within.*) *Enter* 'Pathrick Renny,' our 'ould' friend.—*Dem.* 'Morra' to ye,

Mister Renny ; how's every bone in your body ?' (*shaking his fist with a regular bog-trotter's iron grip. Mr. Renny looks bewildered.*)—*Mr. Renny.* 'Musha ! to be sure I remember ye now, so I do. But sure it's myself would n't ricugnoise ye, ye're lookin' so healthy altogither. And where's the purty gentleman that was wid ye the last toime ye was here ? This is n't he, I'm thinking ; he was a bigger man nor this, eh ? . . . Shure it's myself's moighty glad to say ye agin. An' won't ye come in an' have some dinner wid us ?' [*Invitation politely declined.*]  
—*Dem.* 'Would you do us the favour to tell us the way to the Cavern ?'—*Mr. Renny.* 'Arrah, thin, to be sure I will !' (*Mr. Renny points the way to the celebrated La Moye Cave*) . . . *Mr. Renny.* 'Take care o' yer footin,' no but ; for it's very dangerous. An' don't go into the cave till the toide's on the turn !' . .

"We then clomb adown the crags behind La Moye. What we there beheld [shall be described] to you in the words of the author of *Rambles through the Channel Islands, by a Naturalist*, lest you may imagine that I exaggerate :—

'[An extraordinary cavern] which has attracted hitherto but little attention is situated near La Moye Point in Jersey, on the southern coast. The line of coast is formed by rocks of some elevation at this part, and the action of the sea, when aroused by south-westerly gales, is extremely furious against this rocky barrier.'

"We have had tremendous storms here for the

last few days, during which a French vessel was wrecked on the Minquiers, and lives lost. To-day was 'as still as Heaven,' but the sea was white with foam. So we visited the cave under the most favourable circumstances.

'The cave can only be *safely* approached by sea, although it is accessible with some difficulty and risk by land. The entrance is surrounded by rocks, and is of no great height; but the passage is of some length, and when explored on the retiring of the tide, few places have a more singular appearance. The observer, standing in the dark and gloomy entrance, sees before him at a little distance a rugged excavation, the sides wet with the waters which have just left it, and the whole cavity illumined by the perpendicular light thrown into it from above. The chasm which has thus connected the gloomy passage with the open daylight at the summit of the cliffs, is said to be about a hundred feet deep; but it is impossible to descend it except by the assistance of ropes. It is necessary to be extremely careful to ascertain the state of the tide when exploring this cave, as, when at the full, it entirely covers up the entrance, filling the passage and the open cavity to some height.'<sup>1</sup>

"We arrived at the chasm at high tide, and, as it was a very rough sea, the waves roared like thunder, as they rushed into the chasm, and up its rugged sides. And, as we lay upon our faces, and peered over the sides of the caldron, we could see the foam boiling and the spray spouting at the

<sup>1</sup> "Rambles among the Channel Islands: by a Naturalist," pp. 202-3.—ED.

depth of near a hundred-and-fifty feet. Here we lighted our last cigars, and smoked, to while away the time till the tide would recede to a sufficient level to permit us to explore the cave. The waves roared beneath us, and twice we were splashed with the spray. . . . Would thou couldst behold the south coast of Jersey in a S. W. gale ! Then truly would thy pencil produce works that would rival the masterpieces of Salvator, and thy pen descriptive narratives that would stand a fair comparison with the idyllic letters of 'Demogorgon !'<sup>1</sup> . . .

"And now, my friend, as I am very tired, and my eyes are scarcely able to keep open, I must [desist] for the present. As we were coming down to St. Aubin's, we saw a dog jumping up on a gentleman of tragic countenance, who was quite screwed. Quoth the gentleman to the dog—stretching out his arm in the most dramatic manner, and looking desperately heroic (N. B.—The dog was about six inches in height, and stood by trembling, and appearing to understand every word)—'Now, look here : if *you* come near me *again*, by the living God, I'll knock your head off *clean* !' The dog turned tail, and took to his heels, as if he had seen the ghost of a dog he had quarrelled with in the flesh.—Yours, &c., E. J. A."

LETTER XXIX. (*To G. B.*)—"Jersey, December 22, 1861 . . . . This is to wish you a merry

<sup>1</sup> A *nom de guerre*, under which he wrote for a time.—ED.

Christmas and a happy New Year, together with all the blisses conveyed in the concluding lines of our Philippic friend's 'Ode to G. B.,' and as many more as you like . . . . Now, my fine friend, I expect definite answers to all the following questions :—Have you got your appointment yet? Have you proposed on the strength of it? Have you been accepted, or dost look alone for consolation to the Devil and your razors? What sort of fellow are you *now* at all? Dost sport the terrific awe-inspiring moustache, or hast subsided into the sleek sanctimonious whisker? Dost wax 'thin and spectre-pale' on study: or hast swelled into aldermanic proportions on the prospect of a sedate settlement in life, consolidated by the matrimonial alliance which thou hast contemplated from thy youth up? Art very much grieved at the death of H. R. H the Prince Consort, and dost storm at the insolence of Wilkes and Fairfax; or dost calmly contemplate all other sublunary concerns as of infinitely [little] importance when brought into comparison with Dr. S——'s [examination] papers?—All these questions I expect you will answer in the order in which I have asked them, as, otherwise, you will not make sufficiently ample amends for your protracted silence.

“Here everything is as gloomy as Styx since the news of Prince Albert's death reached the Island. To-day, the day of the funeral (wouldn't you give anything to have been at Windsor to-day?),

all the shops were shut up ; the death-bells knolled from all the church-towers of all the parishes of the little Isle ; all the innumerable flags were struck, and floated drowsily and sullenly at half-mast ; and sixty guns boomed from the grey old Fort, at intervals of four minutes, during the time at which the funeral was supposed to have been going on. Meantime, the mourners go about the streets in crowds. The whole population of Jersey turns out in deepest black. Even \*\*\*\*\* and I had to yield, sorely against our will, to the irresistible current, and invest a portion of our literary reserve-fund on gloves and hat-bands ! . . . We have conceived a strong [distaste] of late for Tennyson's style ; and our present estimate of his poetical abilities is marvellously lower than it was in the days when we used to shout ' O-o-o-o-ri-a-a-a-na ! ' through Grafton-Street, with clenched fists, and appalling strides ! We now deify Wordsworth, as the man ' of most comprehensive soul ' (as Dryden says of Shakespeare), and the purest writer of English, among the poets of the nineteenth century. We read portions of the *Excursion* every night before bedtime, and find the perusal a thousandfold more refreshing to the soul than Tennyson's (saving always *In Memoriam*), or indeed any other poetry, except Shakespeare, the Four Gospels, and Ecclesiastes, with choice selections from the *soi-disant* Prophets.—E. J. A."

Beyond a multitude of letters, two or three essays, and accounts of his rambles, the literary fruits of 1861 had been few—his poetry in particular proving a scanty crop. For this his MS. book bears the following explanatory entry, with which the story of the year may be fittingly concluded :—“ *Mem.* During this year (1861) I produced but little poetry, as my prospects in life were extremely unsettled, and my hold on life seemed for a long period exceedingly insecure. In the early spring I composed a large amount of elaborate verse, the continuation of *The Earl*, a poem projected in the summer of 1860; but as it contained unmistakable evidences of inexperience and ignorance of life, I became dissatisfied with it, and destroyed it.”—But two poems, at least, of real worth were written, also in the earlier part of the year—the lines “To G. B.”, embodying something of his theory of Charity; and, in February, the lines “in memory of the late Captain Boyd, of H. M.’s S. *Ajax*, and those of his crew who perished with him in their attempt to afford assistance to a vessel in distress”—a tragic incident which had just taken place off the Eastern Pier at Kingstown, and by the accounts of which he had been much moved.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See “Poetical Works” (New Edition), p. 314.—Ed.



CHAPTER XIII. 1862, ÆT. 20—.

Happy Days Again.—Dear Friends.—Off to France.—Rovings on Foot.—Avranches.—Good-natured Peasants.—Scene at the Fair.—Henry II.'s Pillar.—Reflections.—Mont St. Michel.—Suggestions for "The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael."—La Naffrée at Sunset.—Villedieu.—An Old Acquaintance.—Villedieu to Vire.—Delicious Hours.—Vire.—Warm greetings.—Wanderings in the Vaux de Vire.—The Mill of Basselin.—A Poor Pole.—Through the Bocage to Caen.—Rambles in Caen.—A Beautiful Nun.—Suggestions for "The Dargle."—Quaint Contrasts.—Reflections.—Walk to Pont l'Évêque.—Honfleur.—Hâvre.—French Soldiers and *Ouvriers*.—Walk into Rouen.—Rambles about Rouen.—Reflections on the Heights of Bon Secours.—St. Adrien in the Rock.—The Forest of Elbœuf.—Long March to Mantes.—Reflections by the Seine.—The "Route de Quarante Sous."—Versailles.—Straitened Circumstances of the Travellers.—Paris.—Wanderings about the City.—The Cellars of the Faubourg St. Antoine.—The Galleries.—Suggestions for "Ovoca."—Easter Sunday in the Bois de Boulogne.—The Empress.—Homeward.—A Trying Walk.—Caen revisited.—Bayeux.—St. Lô.—Coutances Cathedral.—Memorable View.—Granville.—The Remainder Biscuit.

**B**RIGHT and happy, with once more before him a settled prospect of an active, progressive intellectual life, his days now went gaily on, while he returned to his beloved Greek and Roman authors,

read science, and studied with increasing zest the modern tongues.

And there was much besides to make this period a pleasant one, for of true and warm-hearted friends around him there was no lack, and to several he was an object of the tenderest solicitude. An excellent old gentleman and lady, residing in the Island, were so proud and so fond of him that they were pleased to call themselves his "second father and mother;" and their affection and kindness well entitled them to that designation. Among the acquaintances whom he met at their house was one lady who, from a very pathetic association, interested him much; she was the mother of that beautiful "Margaret A\*\*\*\*" to whose early death François Victor-Hugo makes touching allusion in *La Normandie Inconnue*. A most eccentric gentleman, for his introduction to whom he was indebted to the same friends, I cannot pass over without a word of description. Mr. Malheureux resided some miles from St. Helier, in a little country-house. Though in the full possession of health and energy, from the inside of his mansion he rarely, if ever, emerged. There he occupied himself in what he called "antiquarian research"—that is to say, in compiling works on genealogies and antiquities, of which, I have reason to suspect, other persons reaped the credit, and perhaps the profit, elsewhere. He always wore, even on the hottest days, a thick comforter and a travelling-cap, and

complained incessantly of the draughts and the chills. His "extremities were never warm." Indeed, to Armstrong, who now and then, in his country strolls, would drop in to enjoy a chat with him, he presented a remarkable, and somewhat dismal, spectacle. During a period of four years, he declared, he had never "gone into town" (visited the town of St. Helier) except once; and on that unhappy occasion he had caught a severe cold in his head; accordingly he had made up his mind never to venture out of doors again. Apart from such trivial peculiarities of a *malade imaginaire*, Mr. Malheureux was a most worthy and kind person; and possessed so much real antiquarian and historical information that his conversation was both profitable and agreeable. But the conversation in which my brother then most delighted was that of a kind old kinsman of his own, General S\*\*\*\*\*, a Peninsular veteran, who not only abounded in stories of his own experience in war and travel, but inherited many of the anecdotes, and some measure of the faculty of telling them, of his gallant father, Sir John B\*\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*\*\*, a friend of Nelson, a merry companion of William IV., and author of the famous address at the Battle of the Nile—"Now, my lads, you see that country yonder? That's the 'Land of Egypt,' and if you don't fight like devils, you'll be in the 'House of Bondage!'" The old General's picturesque descriptions, over his wine, of the English Army

winding through the Pyrenees, of his marches across France, of the distant countries in which he had been, and his narratives of the reckless frolics of his ancestors, and other like traditions, made an evening spent with him a pleasure after Armstrong's own heart; and his presence in the Island lent it an aspect of home. Younger friends he had also, though he was perhaps more shy in cultivating them: while emotions of the tenderest and deepest kind were awakened, which threw a glamour over the time and the place, and were not soon to die or be forgotten.

So the months passed speedily over, and the time was now approaching when it would be necessary to return to Ireland once more; and there still was Normandy unvisited, its white sands, overtopped by the triple towers of Coutances Cathedral, glittering before him in the sun every clear day that he mounted the hills; and all its art, literature, and history haunting his mind and dazzling his fancy. It was resolved, accordingly, to start off on the first day of April, and wander on foot through France.

Before the first of April had arrived a demur from home had almost deprived him of the power of accomplishing this; for it was well understood that, once away in such scenes, there was no possibility of calculating where his love of nature, of art, of adventure, might lead him; and over-excitement

and over-exertion might shatter all hopes. It was therefore regarded as a point of honour, both by him and by his companion, at least to demand no assistance from that source ; and they resolved to start off on what they might happen to have in their pockets and on their backs when the day dawned, and to rely upon their own ingenuity to overcome resultant obstacles. There was something delightful to the boyish mind in the thought of a rough free life of new and strange experiences under difficulties ; and particularly was such a prospect welcome to him, who had been so long obliged to nurse himself and live delicately.

On the last day of March it was found that the two youths had really something less than seven pounds between them ; but they smiled at the possible consequences ; and when the morning-gun boomed from Elizabeth Castle at the next dawn, they rose, took their knapsacks, cloaks, and umbrellas, walked aboard the little steamboat *Comète*, and were soon steaming away for the long-wished-for shores.

“ Armstrong,” writes the younger traveller, from whose subsequent record I shall quote such passages as this Memoir seems to demand, “ was in the highest and wildest spirits of the old days ; lent a hand to the sailors at their ropes ; and in a quarter-of-an-hour we were the centre of a group of seamen and Norman and Breton peasants, singing

Irish melodies, chatting in bad French, and joining in the chorus of Frederic Bérat's *chanson*, *Ma Normandie*, led off by a jolly woodcutter of Rouffigny. François Debroise"—"a sturdy woodcutter of Rouffigny," as Armstrong describes him, "apparelled in a huge round hat, a blouse profusely adorned with neat white braid, and a large mantle of yellow home-spun, variegated by perpendicular stripes of blue and red. *Item*. He carried an umbrella—the peasants of Normandy do so on all occasions; in fact this accompaniment is as inseparable from the beau-ideal of a Viroise brunette or a Calvados farmer as it is from that of a Paul Pry, a mother Gamp, or a Dr. Riccabocca."... "When the ruling spirit of all this boisterous mirth, in reply to questions asked, informed the Frenchmen that he was about to travel 'for the benefit of his health,' it was regarded as an excellent joke, and greeted with uproarious laughter—' *Pour la santé. Monsieur! Mon Dieu! Monsieur est frais comme un poulet!*' And so in good sooth he was; and when we started from Granville that afternoon to walk to Avranches, he put François Debroise and his younger companion 'to the pin of their collars' to keep up with him, and was the only fresh one of the three when, after a rapid march of seventeen or eighteen miles, we entered the latter town while it was yet early in the evening. . . ."

## AVRANCHES.

“Winding up the ascent to the town, amidst crowds of market-folk, and beggars, and lazars—one of whom, with trousers constructed of straw-ropes, excited our particular attention—at a sudden turn of a street, our merry woodcutter abruptly and mysteriously vanished, leaving us in amused wonder at his flight . . . We had resolved to see as much of the life of the people as we possibly could; and so plunged forthwith into the by-streets, and entered in succession several of the poorer cafés; and, the day having been fair-day, we had abundant opportunity for observation. At the sign of the *Cheval Blanc*, in the Rue Pot d’Étain, we were shown upstairs into a little narrow and dark chamber, in which, around a table, was seated a group of old male and female peasants that would have delighted the heart of a Dutch painter. Old wrinkled faces surmounted by tall white caps, stately antique dames and little withered crones, *vicillards* in blue blouses and shepherds in goat-skin jackets, all chattering, nodding, gesticulating, sipping their cider or their coffee. And by all alike we were hailed with curiosity, yet with politeness, and with a kindliness almost approaching affection. The bearing of these simple, poor people surprised us beyond measure; but we soon found it was nothing exceptional. Throughout our rambles in Lower

Normandy, in the course of which we were constantly brought into contact with the very poorest classes, the same gentleness and consideration were invariably shown us. And not only this ; but the people seemed fully to enter into the spirit of our travels, and to enjoy our enjoyment of the curious humble foreign life which was then so palpably new to us. . . .”

“Leaving our knapsacks,” writes Armstrong, “at the *hospitium modicum* of Madame Delanoë, we hastened to the Place, in which the celebration of the Fair was at its acme. Amusements of every description divided the attention of the assembled peasantry with buying, and selling, and cider-drinking. A quiet cheerfulness prevailed among the collected masses . . . One merry group surrounded an indefatigable quack-doctor and his faithful Achates, a jack-pudding with bells in his cap ; another group made the welkin ring as they watched the revolutions of a gigantic whirligig. . . All was enjoyment and innocent mirth. There was no bitter feeling, no invidious glance, no angry altercation, to disturb the charm ; and the evening sun looked down upon as merry an assembly as ever [tongue] described. But hearken ! The deep bell of the church (which rises gloomily in the centre of the Place) ever and anon breaks in upon the murmur of happy voices with solemn reverberating peals. It sounded as distant thunder above the



laughter of the summer sea. Anxious to discover the cause of these melancholy tolls, we pushed our way through the crowd of merry-makers, and stood in front of the open portal of the church. By the dim light of a single lamp contending with the shades of evening, we could perceive that the interior was filled with mourners—men, women, and children arrayed in sable garments, and kneeling devoutly and sorrowfully. A solemn chaunt arose, and mingled strangely with the sounds of revelry without. Meanwhile, a coffin, covered with a pall ornamented with borders and broideries of white, was borne from beside the altar, and, [having been] placed upon a simple hearse, was slowly removed to the cemetery on the hill-side. The boisterous murmur of the crowd was hushed at once. Not a voice was to be heard. Every man lifted his hat with sorrowful reverence as the dark procession passed. Presently, the last melancholy figures of the *cortège* wound into the narrow mediæval street leading to the place of tombs, and in a moment all was mirth and merriment again. Indeed, as the sun appears to shine more brightly than ever after a shower has fallen, the enjoyment of the crowd after this incident seemed keener and more intense than before. How true is it that man, even when his soul is clouded by the proximity of death, is incapable of realizing the exceeding darkness of that mighty Shade! When the image of a dead man's bones

Irish melody, banquet-table of Trimalchio,  
 in the choir, the ghastly emblem of mortality  
*mandie, le* the Chian of its sparkle, or chilled  
 François' breasts of the revellers. We play  
 Rouffis' mounded sword that marks the grave;  
 relled with our light laughter the deep silence  
 ado' of the tomb; for 'our abode is far too near the  
 of shadows of darkness for our hearts to tremble at the  
 s' shadows of its portals.' . ."

"A long, long time that evening Armstrong stood  
 by the shattered pillar of the old cathedral, where  
 Henry II., on returning from the conquest of  
 Ireland, received apostolic absolution for the  
 murder of Becket;<sup>1</sup> and there, looking over the  
 sea, he talked dreamily of those distant times, and  
 of all the fruits of that event, the pageant of the  
 ages, as it were, moving before his eyes like the  
 spectacle of a mighty visible stage.

<sup>1</sup> It bears the following inscription, which he carefully  
 copied into his note-book, under his little rough pencil-sketch  
 of the pillar itself :—

"SUR CETTE PIERRE,  
 ICI, À LA PORTE DE LA CATHÉDRALE D'AVRANCHES,  
 APRES LE MEURTRE DE THOMAS BECKET,  
 ARCHEVÊQUE DE CANTORBERY,  
 HENRI II.,  
 ROI D'ANGLETERRE ET DUC DE NORMANDIE,  
 REÇUT À GENOUE,  
 DES LÉGATS DU PAPE  
 L'ABSOLUTION APOSTOLIQUE,  
 LE DIMANCHE XXII MAI MCLXXII."—ED.

2016. 345  
 So, he caught his first perfect view  
 of the remarkable pile of Mont St.  
 which left so deep an impression upon  
 and charmed his imagination for years.  
 The next day was spent in saunter-  
 ing about Avranches. It was intended that  
 to visit Mont St. Michel ; but, as we looked out  
 over the Bay of Cancale, then a tract of watery sand,  
 threaded by the rivers of Avranches and Pontorson  
 and many smaller streams, a fog arose and blotted  
 out the Mount and all its pinnacles as if they had  
 been swept away for ever ; a phenomenon which  
 has been described with vividness and intensity in  
*The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael* :—

‘ I see the mist,  
 The death-like vapour crawl along the sands,  
 And lift a ghastly head and slowly fall.  
 It blots away the pinnacles and towers  
 Of the crag-buttressed Prison, swathing round  
 The dark bulk like a sheet that wraps the dead.  
 Clammy and chill, it creeps from pool to pool,  
 With slow unsightly motion trailing on  
 Inevitable, as the sure step of doom.  
 It swallows up the woods, the waves, the hills,  
 And lies like Death upon the gloomy bay,  
 White, livid, torpid, motionless—a snake  
 Sleeping within its slimy coils. It steals  
 Into my spirit and clouds it with a fear,  
 Formless and vague as its own mass . . . ’”<sup>1</sup>

Of many beautiful spots in the neighbourhood

<sup>1</sup> “ Poetical Works ” (New Edition), p. 217.—ED.

of Avranches, one of the loveliest is La Naffrée, and an evening there was not long afterwards thus described :—

“The sun was just beginning to dip into the calm bay, as we wandered into those rocky moss-grown paths, and we seated ourselves on the trunk of an aged oak, to enjoy the delicious prospect that stretched around us on every side. There stood the grey old Mont Saint-Michel before us, in the midst of its wild bay, torn and shattered by the storms and lightnings of ages, its white pinnacles and turrets glittering in the crimson sunbeams, the blue ripples breaking around its battlements beneath. Further on stretched the rugged coast of Brittany, over which the shades of evening had already begun to fall. The sun dropt slowly down from one ridge of cloud to another till it sank into the peaceful sea ; a blackbird was piping in the boughs beside us ; a tiny rivulet murmured drowsily in the moss and ivy at our feet ; the low of the oxen from distant fields resounded through the groves ; a grey-haired woodman issued from the thicket, axe in hand, bade us a rough *bon soir*, and disappeared among the trees ; and the bright moon came forth above, and the last tints of sunlight melted from the western sea.” And it was this spot, I have no doubt, which was in Armstrong’s mind when he wrote, in the *Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael*—

“ In the woods

The pathway circles, roofed with gnarled boughs,  
Paven with wild-flowers,—oxlips, violets,  
The primrose and the lenten-lily. Far  
In the rich woodland peal the chapel-bells  
Of Avranches, and the sea's low voice replies  
In whispers from the sandy beach below.  
A spot for lovers at the fall of eve  
To watch the daylight die behind the hills,  
The shadows lengthen on the fields of corn,  
And farms, and orchards, and St. Michael's towers  
Based on the crag, girt by the buffeting surge.”<sup>1</sup>

But the beautiful and the comical appealed to him with equal certainty; and, ere he left Avranches, as the ludicrous consequences of travelling with so light a purse in that land of France began to play before his fancy, he sat down one night and wrote on the fly-leaf of his rough Diary this dainty love-lyric, addressed to an imaginary lady in dreamland :—

“ TO LALAGE.

“ While late at night,  
Fatigued and starved,  
A hapless wight,  
By flickering light  
Of rush, I eat  
(With aching feet)  
A cutlet carved  
From cat deceased  
Of surfeiting  
On rats ; or feast  
On anything

<sup>1</sup> “ Poetical Works ” (New Edition), pp. 160-161.—ED.

That comes to hand,  
 From bread of sand  
 To hoof of horse—  
 O Lalage,  
 I think of thee,  
 And—O! Love's magic power!—  
 Steaks from the corse  
 Of putrid horse  
 Become beef, cat veal,  
 Dog mutton, dust meal,  
 Sand-bread, too, cakes of flour!"

#### AVRANCHES TO VILLEDIEU.

"... One day, before the dew had left the fields, we started for the village of Villedieu, about sixteen miles distant from Avranches. The meadows and orchards gleamed in the morning sun, as we strolled leisurely along the clear broad road; and merrily the bells of the horse-collars jingled, as the peasants in their broad-brimmed hats and braided blouses came driving past to market, with the produce of their farms stowed away in their long unwieldy carts; and the birds carolled in the fragrant hedgerows or by the river-bed; till the dew arose in a gentle mist from the low deep-wooded hills, and the sun shone forth in a sky of unclouded blue.... Strolling along, we stopped at the summit of a rising ground, to take a last view of Avranches crowning its verdant slopes and embowered in poplars, elms, and orchard-trees in full bloom; and it was with feelings of sadness that we bade adieu to

its tall houses and ruining walls. We descended the hill, and, silently musing, pursued our way. . . . We had some amusing adventures on the route, for we were laid hold of by a half-mad, half-tipsy *avocat*, who led us from cottage to cottage over his estate, and thereby enabled us to see much of the home-life of the peasantry. . . . When we came within sight of Villedieu, and were just about to descend the hill to the little town, as if to add to the whimsical character of the day's experiences, the first person to greet us, with a wild shout of welcome, was our old fellow-traveller François Debroise, who, with his young brown-eyed Bretonne wife, came rushing forward, caught our hands eagerly, declared they had been talking about us that very moment, and that they were both 'enchanted' to see us. Surely we had little reason to complain of any lack of hospitality in that pleasant land ! As we passed along the little street of Villedieu, the inhabitants of the diminutive town came rushing to the doors to stare at us ; the clinking of the hammers on the copper vessels, which are made here in abundance, ceased, and the brawny artisans came out and grinned.

"But we were still further to be amused next morning ; for the hideous old shrew of a landlady," nick-named in the Diary 'the Witch of Endor,' "did not appear, or permit anyone else to appear, to make our breakfasts, at half-past five o'clock ;

and, as we entered the kitchen of the inn, through which the only passage lay to the streets, what was our astonishment and horror when we discovered that the kitchen was also the venerable lady's sleeping apartment ! And—O Heavens !—there was the old Witch herself, sitting up in bed, adorned with a prodigious night-cap, as big as a baldachin, with her sharp old nose protruding from beneath, and her bony finger outstretched in an attitude of denunciation ! There was no possibility of retreat ; apologies, though elaborate and profuse, could not better the situation ; nothing remained but, with averted face, to drop the amount of the bill into the bony palm, rush to the door, turn the key, open, and bolt down the street with the sensation of having fifty barking dogs at our heels, and a shout of 'stop-thief' reëchoed from every porch and window of the town. Our wonder, however, was not long in wearing away, as we soon found that if we wished to get up and take our departure early in that part of France, we should have invariably to pay the bill under like embarrassing conditions. . . ."

#### VILLEDIEU TO VIRE.

"Having obtained a breakfast with difficulty, by rousing an old man who was asleep in an open *café*, we proceeded on our way to Vire. It was a beautiful morning, and the rising sun was just



beginning to lift the dew from the hill-sides when we started. The road ran for a considerable distance along the side of a steep hill, amid delicious meadows, orchards, farm-gardens, bits of wild forest-land, and pleasant pastures; and, as we moved along, the sounds of soft bells from unseen church-towers in the plain below came borne on the mild breeze through the woods in fitful melody. The air was sweet with perfumes of apple-blossoms, of pine-trees, of oxlips and primroses. Now and then a market-cart would come by with jingling bells, and peasants singing in it. Now and then we would pass some time-worn little chapel with its dark yew trees around it, and a priest with broad-brimmed hat would come out and greet us benignly. Sometimes we would wander off the highway into fragrant woods; sometimes sit by the roadside to smoke a pipe, or rest, or chant together songs laden with memories of bygone days and other scenes. Sometimes we would enter some little farm-house, ask for a drink of water, and be given milk or cider instead, and be compelled to sit down and tell where we had come from and whither we were going, exciting the wonder of the home-staying peasant. A delightful land, a sweet season, a happy, roving, careless life: we almost began to wish that it might go on for ever. Before sundown, sauntering leisurely along in the heat, we found ourselves in sight of the picturesque town of

Vire, standing on its high hill, at the convergence of its many valleys. Here, as if he were some friendly harbinger, going before us in all our wanderings, who should we meet again, as we toiled up the steep ascent towards the Château Montgomerie, but François Debroise, who, accompanied by a group of merry peasants, rushed down with vociferous greetings. All his companions, sympathetically sharing his enthusiasm, insisted on grasping our hands, and shaking them in like manner. Such a hand-shaking, such a voluble welcome, such fantastic gesticulation we had never before known. It was long before we could proceed in our ascent, and when we did, there were no 'adieux' spoken, but only a wild 'à revwair! à revwair!' (the Norman's *au revoir*!)—as though the same meetings were to be repeated thereafter in every town in our journey."

#### VIRE.

The walk from Villedieu to Vire, which led the travellers through one of the most beautiful tracts of Lower Normandy, supplied not a little of the imagery of *The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael*, and is alluded to in several of the succeeding letters.

"... Vire, like Avranches, was in all the bustle of a fair or market-day, and peasants from every corner of the Department seemed congregated there. Having

made our way to a hotel at the eastern extremity of the town, commanding a wide view of what has been well-named the '*campagna felice* of Normandy ;' and having obtained for 1 fr. 50 cents a room that, matched with our Villedieu den, looked like a very temple of luxury ; we sallied forth, to mingle with the people in their haunts. We found the din of voices in the cafés and restaurants absolutely deafening ; and the lively happy faces and manners of the people struck us more here than even in Brittany and the Côtentin. Their good-nature was unbounded. In no country that I have ever since visited have I met with such genuine good-heartedness and absence of sullenness as in that blithe Basse Normandie.

"There was one thing, I may mention, upon which the Normans to whom we spoke always seemed agreed to insist—namely, that Armstrong was a Norman in features and physique—in everything but language. His fair complexion, which the sun did not render dusky, his brown hair, oval face, regular features—these, they said, were all characteristics of *le vrai Norman*. He was darker, I think, than the average true-blooded Norman ; but there was a sufficiently close resemblance to the type to be striking. Other subjects on which they were particularly prone to comment were his manifest activity and strength, and the appearance he presented on his long marches

of never being fatigued. Of a vast increase of health and strength he was already himself conscious, and any anxiety which may have haunted one at starting, was now completely allayed.

“This day, having walked some seventeen or eighteen miles in a warm sun, he set off, after we had wandered about the town, to explore the hollows of the celebrated Vaux de Vire; but more especially to seek the mill of the famous poet Olivier Basselin, originator of the ‘Vaudevilles,’ so named from these very glens. Much to our surprise, nobody seemed to know where the mill of the *bon patriot* was. ‘There is no *miller* of the name in Vire, Messieurs.’ It was not until after many wanderings and windings about the valleys that we lighted upon it. But indeed the worthy, goodnatured, and vivacious folk of Normandy were not particularly well-informed on matters geographical. Where Ireland was, for example, hardly one to whom we spoke could form apparently the faintest conception. The noises of that blustering isle had not made themselves heard so far. But some thought it was in Picardy, and some insisted that it was near Poitou; while one dear old

<sup>1</sup> Not worse this, however, than the reply of an English villager on the banks of the Thames near Twickenham, to whom a certain traveller once applied for information respecting the whereabouts of Pope’s Villa. “Pope? Pope?” exclaimed the honest Briton—“*Pope!* I know nought of him. *We have no Pope here*”—for which fact he seemed devoutly grateful to Almighty God.—ED.

woman pathetically begged to be informed if, being, as we had just told her, an island, it was not necessarily in the neighbourhood of Mozambique. England they knew of well enough—what Frenchman does not?—and that Duke William and his Normans had once upon a time succeeded in conquering her. But for the rest, beyond their own cantons all seemed vague, shadowy, and dim. . . .

“Sitting in the gardens of the Château Montgomerie, Armstrong fell into conversation with a Polish gentleman, an exile, who became very communicative, and told him his history, which affected him much. During the few days spent at Vire they met several times, and the exile became still more confiding; and in Armstrong’s rough journal-notes occurs the following allusion :—‘In the evening [we] studied the people and their manners from the window of our inn; came to the conclusion that they were a very happy set; our poor P<sup>o</sup>le walked through the crowd of happy faces, dejected and friendless.’

“Many happy hours were here spent in meditating among the pleasant Vaux de Vire, in loitering in the churches, in ‘studying the people and their manners.’ And here we resolved to extend our rambles beyond the limits originally assigned. Armstrong had felt himself so strong and so unweariable, his enjoyment was so keen, the delight in wandering on and on into the heart of the vast

Continent was so enthralling, that it was agreed to push forward on foot until the few pounds in our pockets should be nearly, or altogether, exhausted.

#### THROUGH THE BOCAGE TO CAEN.

“.. Starting from Vire, one morning early, we ascended the highlands of the Bocage, and, with unbounded joy, saw the long white roads stretching away far into the east, leading, as we felt, to the ends of Europe. But we were disappointed to find that the Bocage itself, the traditional haunt of the ‘Norman fetiches’—the spirits of unbaptized infants—of the wolf, and of the wild-boar, was well-nigh cut to annihilation. Piles of felled pine-trees stood on every side, lopped, topped, and butted, and ready to be carted away; and what had been once a beautiful forest, was now a shrubless tract as bare as the moorlands of Wicklow or of Donegal. We stopped at the little chapel dedicated ‘A la Protectrice du Bocage.’ The wind was sighing sadly around the image of the forlorn Mother, whose power had not prevailed to stay the destroyer’s hand; and we wondered how long she herself would be suffered to retain her disputed sway.

“A pleasant and interesting journey brought us that evening within sight of

‘The spires  
Of moonlit Caen, piercing the starry heaven.’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Poetical Works,” (New Edition), p. 169.—ED.

RAMBLES IN CAEN.

“ . . Caen, without a doubt one of the most picturesque towns in Northern Europe, with its two fair rivers, its avenues of old and lofty trees, and its clusters of stately towers—in artistic and historical interest alike abundant—was to Armstrong sweeter than fields of roses. To the church of St. Pierre, with its exquisite tower and spire, the perfection of art in its delicacy, power, and self-restraint ; to the venerable time-stained St. Étienne, the mausoleum of the Conqueror ; to the shady walks by the Orne and the Odon, he would return again and again. And especially he loved to sit long under the high-vaulted roofs of St. Étienne, and gaze, and meditate upon the history of long-past ages, until he felt absorbed utterly from modern thought and modern fancies, and subdued into perfect harmony with the spirit of dim eld. . . .

“The old attendant who showed us over the Église de la Ste. Trinité, led us down to a crypt in which stands a tomb which none should leave unvisited ; and, drawing aside a curtain, discovered to our eyes, not only the sarcophagus, but two nuns kneeling beside it in prayer. One of these ladies, whose face was turned towards us, was young and of surpassing beauty. Doubtless the old *concierge* had known who was there, and even calculated upon receiving an additional largess for his generous

services. We fell back, 'abashed at so much beauty.' But the vision of that beautiful face, the delicate rose-tint of the cheek, the long dark eyelashes drooped over the eyes, the lips moving in prayer, did not soon fade from the memory of either ; and I have no doubt they suggested in great part the description of Adelë in the poem of *The Dargle*—

' Amid the towers and citadels of Caen,  
In St. Étienne Adele knelt in prayer—  
. . . . . O, who could gaze  
On those sweet pensive eyes nor feel the flame  
Of warm affection kindled? Who could watch  
Those drooping lids and moving lips, and hear  
That murmur of pure prayer, and nurse one thought  
Of evil toward Adele? . . . . .  
. . . . . the light of eve  
Fell on her golden hair, and seemed to breathe  
A holy kiss on her fair innocent face,  
And glittered on the diamond in her ring,  
Veiling her hand with splendour ; and the roll  
Of a sweet chant from the near convent came,  
Like the low murmur of a moonlit wave,  
And made her weep and smile ; when at the door  
Of the great church the young knight stood, and seemed  
To gaze on the Madonna of his dreams  
In Erin's mountains. . . . .'<sup>1</sup>

" A very different sight presented itself to him when he was led through the Hôtel Dieu. Sick soldiers, some of them suffering from recent amputation of limbs, were tossing in painful unrest upon

<sup>1</sup> " Poetical Works " (New Edition), pp. 89, 90.—ED.



their couches, and many a mournful eye was turned towards our healthy, sunburnt faces as we stept lightly, but with sad hearts, through those chambers of agony. It seemed to us even a greater intrusion than to have broken unawares upon the prayerful solitude of a nun. . . .

“As we passed along one of the quiet quays, one evening, gazing at a beautiful sunset, our attention was suddenly arrested by the sound of voices wrangling in our mother-tongue; and, walking on, we perceived that the speakers were a landsman on the quay-side and several sailors in a ship. They were arguing on the question of the essential qualities of a *haro*. Said the landsman, who was a Scot, proceeding apparently according to true Socratic method, ‘What’s a *haro*?’—‘Lord Nelson was a *haro*,’ replied a sailor.—‘Lord Nelson was *no haro*,’ exclaimed the Scot: ‘Robert Bruce was a *haro*—*I’m a haro!*’—‘*You a haro!*’ cried the Englishman—‘*You a haro, Sawney!* You’re not the patch on a *haro*’s breeches!’—Sawney turned to us indignantly, and lodged a public protest against the want of manners which, he said, these Southrons always exhibited towards all gentlemen in general, and him (Sawney) in particular; told us that it was not often he heard his own tongue spoken, and when an English ship came in he liked to go down and have a chat, and unlock his long pent-up bosom—‘and here, this was

the usage he got !' We tendered him our heartiest commiserations, and, passing on, still gazed at that sunset over the beautiful city, which Armstrong never forgot—the light through the perforated spires, the exquisite buildings mirrored in the calm water, the little steamboat passing across the image of the spires of the Conqueror's church, and the shadows of the leafy branches, and the reflections of the stars—and still we could not banish Sawney and the 'hero's breeches' from our minds. Such contrasts as these were fast developing in Armstrong a conviction that the ludicrous and the beautiful, the happy and the painful, the poetical and the prosaic, the practical and the ideal, move perpetually in alternate predominance ; a theory thus germinated he sought later on, for a time, to apply to art, the result being work not unlike the mock-heroics of *Don Juan*. and it underlies the following sentence of his Diary, scribbled down on the night of that fair sunset :—  
 'Walk up the right bank of the Orne—lovely views of the city and its exquisite spires, each a history—the railway and the steamboat reflected in the river along with the spires of Matilda and William!—Philosophical musings—return by Boulevards to St. Étienne—interior once again—walk over the tomb of William the Conqueror ! . . . '

## CAEN TO PONT-L'ÉVÊQUE.

"Starting from Caen in dense mist, one morning, we passed through a beautiful pastoral country, and then walked through the low-lying marshy tracts to Dozulé. The people in the villages along the route were occupied in winding silk on bobbins—a sickly and not very happy-looking community, and seemingly without the vivacity of the peasantry west of Caen. Somewhere near Troarn we went into a cottage to get a drink of milk. For three sous we were given two bowlfuls of the richest imaginable. The old woman from whom we purchased it evinced the most motherly interest in our welfare, and held us long in somewhat mournful converse. At last, when we rose to go, she shook her head, and held out her hand to bid farewell. 'Ah,' she said, 'you are going; you will never pass this way again!' 'Nay,' said we, 'not so; perhaps we may return by this very road in less than a month's time.' But the old woman moved her head up and down with a slow and melancholy motion, saying, '*Jamais, mes enfants, jamais, jamais, jamais!*', and it seemed like the voice of some dismal oracle prophesying vast and indefinite disasters.

"Gradually emerging from the low and dismal swamps, we ascended into a hilly district, and caught sight, through the drifting mist, of some majestic woods, which a half-cracked fellow in a

blouse, who offered us some snuff, as big as road-shingles, and nearly as hard, informed as was *Le Réal Pré*, which is Norman for *Royal Pré*: and, moving still onward, we found ourselves in a delightful country of wood and dale and richest pasture—a land flowing with milk, and *smelling*, at least, of honey, and of all delicious blossoms: here and there picturesque wooden cottages, with their stripes of black and white, all pied and streaked like Jacob's rods and the kine of which he defrauded Laban, peering out of the mist on the hill-side amid 'spectral pines,' or standing at the end of some bloomy garden by the road-border; and pear-orchards tumbling down into meadowy hollows—white cataracts of blossom; and groups of pink peach-trees,—rosy leaf-fountains, dropping their luxuriant burthens on the earth like spray.

"We strolled leisurely down into Pont l'Évêque, and put up at the Hôtel du Bras d'Or."

#### PONT L'ÉVÊQUE TO HONFLEUR AND HÂVRE

"From Pont l'Évêque we walked through woods, valleys, pear-trees, cherry-trees, apple-trees, peach-trees—leagues of blossom, 'delectable vales'—to Honfleur; where an afternoon was spent in wandering over the heights of La Grace, in musing in the little Chapel, with its hundreds of marine votive offerings; and in gazing at the magnificent river winding down between stately banks, and wedding

itself with the sea. In the evening we crossed to Havre . . .”

Of this portion of the route we get a vivid glimpse in the description of the wanderings of the lonely Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael—

“On through the blossomed valleys wearily  
I dragged my solitary way, and passed  
The blue, the slumbering Seine, from bank to bank,  
To the great Haven, with its crowded marts  
And labour-ringing quays.”<sup>1</sup>

#### HÂVRE.

“In Hâvre everything was intensely disagreeable. The dusty, blowy, cold, March-like weather rendered walking about unpleasant; but to one fresh from the delicious fields and orchards of Basse Normandie what could be more detestable than the ‘crowded marts and labour-ringing quays,’ the noise, the town dust, and the town ‘cads?’ The difference between the French peasant and the French *bourgeois* was here at once painfully apparent. The healthy, happy, honest-looking faces were nowhere to be seen; but, instead of them, the round and tallowy countenance of the plethoric merchant and the sicklier visage of his dissipated clerk . . .

“Longing, like our Caen acquaintance Sawney, ‘to hear our mother-tongue spoken,’ we ventured

<sup>1</sup> “Poetical Works” (New Edition), p. 169-170.—ED.

to make some inquiries, respecting places in the neighbourhood, of some young English agents in a shipping-office. We were met with a frown of suspicion, and an obstinate taciturnity. Walking along the quays, we saw everywhere posted up in the windows, 'English spoken here;' and, the humour of the thing having captivated us, we determined to see the matter out; and one shop after another was entered; and everywhere only roughness and rudeness were the results. We found, furthermore, that our own countrymen and countrywomen here were mostly of the vilest and most degraded class. A bustling seaport-town—with its shops, its sailors, its busy quays—has always for an imaginative man a certain fascination. Havre presented all that life, energy, movement: but no other attraction. To its people Armstrong took an inveterate dislike. Their very accent was unwelcome; and their coarse *grassement* sounded vulgar in comparison with the rough-trilled *r's* of the Bas Norman and Breton peasant . . ."

#### FRENCH SOLDIERS AND OUVRIERS.

" . . A rough comfortless walk we had of it, as we ascended the hills on the road from Havre to St. Romain. A cold and fierce wind, laden with clouds of dust, was blowing in our faces; and rain threatened darkly. We could hardly make head against the gale. . .

“ We generally wore on our walks light leather leggings to the knee, which we found often comfortable and a great protection against driving rain and sleet. There was at that time in vogue a popular song called *Jolies Bottes*, which we had heard for the first time in Hâvre. As we were trudging forward, we spied a portion of what proved to be a regiment of infantry coming along in a vast cloud of dust. As we approached one another, the whole body set up a chorus of ‘ *Jolies bottes, jolies bottes ! Jolies bottes, bottes, bottes !* ’ with apparently infinite enjoyment. We could not help laughing ; and, as they were marching at ease, we strode right into the middle of them, waving our umbrellas and joining lustily in the chorus ; and thus passed through them to the end. Whereupon the fellows set up a great cheer of applause ; and a cry of ‘ *bons garçons, bons garçons !* ’ followed us as we went on our way. . . . I must say that invariably, *when off duty*, we found the French soldier an inoffensive, pleasant, communicative fellow, though excitable and ridiculous enough, sometimes, when *on duty* ; and many a long chat we had with conscripts, fighters from Algeria, heroes of Solferino, veterans of the Crimea—the latter appearing particularly well-disposed towards us as Englishmen ; and Armstrong seemed always, somehow, to attract their confidence. . . . But the geniality of the lower orders almost everywhere seemed unfailing. As we

entered, that same day, a large café at St. Romain crowded with *ouvriers* and all kinds of strange-looking folk, we seemed to become objects of general and intense curiosity. Innumerable questions were put to us; and some men would insist that we were spies. One very sharp old fellow cross-questioned Armstrong in a manner which would not have ill become an Irish criminal's Irish counsel—by which I mean, that he was alternately minatory, insolent, shrewd, and ridiculous. Armstrong for a long time played him and the others off with a quiet mischievous irony which was peculiarly his own, and led them a dance into all kinds of absurdities. At last, on his protesting a general innocence and ignorance of all things in the Heaven and on the Earth, the old inquisitor, screwing up one eye, and looking particularly knowing, asked him if he ‘understood the difference between raw meat and cooked meat.’ This ended the wordy encounter. Armstrong burst out laughing; and there was a general roar throughout the whole room; and then there was a clinking of glasses, and a shaking of hands, and a universal drinking of healths; and we went off, leaving the Frenchmen in high good-humour. . . .”

#### ROUEN.

“ . . . It was a fair moonlight night when we walked into Rouen, and halted in silent wonder



before the western portal of St. Ouen's. The moon was rising over the grey carven towers, and every pinnacle stood clear against the starry blue and the white drifting clouds. It was long before we could turn away from that beautiful spectacle, the fairest of the kind that either of us had ever yet seen. The perfect symmetry of the building, the ample space in front and around it, its sharply-cut outlines, its exquisite rose-window, seen as they were in the soft white light of the moon, and coming before our eyes suddenly and unexpectedly, seemed to us more like a vision than the work of mortal hands. And when we did move reluctantly away, every turn of almost every street brought us new delights and new surprises—antique gables, beautiful churches, glimpses of the moonlit river, of tall glittering poplars on verdant islets, of far-stretching misty meadows, of white cliffs, of thronging masts, of ships lying alongside broad and handsome quays; and then the Cathedral itself, that inexhaustible wonder of architecture, with its stern towers, its dark, ugly, yet impressive, spire of iron, and the innumerable carvings of its magnificent façade; and all these in the glorious night, silvered with moonbeams, and canopied by the blue and starry heavens . . .

“It is always a pleasant office to record acts of hospitality and kindness, and I cannot here deny myself the pleasure of mentioning the extreme good-

nature and helpfulness of the landlord of the Hôtel du Grand Vatel, who not only gave us one of the best rooms in his excellent inn for one franc a-night, but interested himself about us in a most parental manner—lent us guide-books, directed us to all the most interesting objects in the city, and did everything in his power to make his boy-guests feel perfectly at home during their sojourn in that beautiful capital of Normandy . . .”

The following day was Palm Sunday—*le dimanche du buis bénit*. High-mass in the Cathedral was a spectacle too imposing not to be seen. Those who have read the passages of Armstrong's Journal, quoted above, descriptive of his visit to Brittany, will have observed what attraction any imposing ancient ritual had for his imagination, and how, notwithstanding his strong personal repugnance to received forms of religious doctrine, he could sympathize adequately with the reverence of the devotee for the ceremonies of the Church of Rome.

“The procession of the priests and choristers up the vast cathedral-aisle,” continues the narrative: “the swaying of censers, and sprinkling of lustral water; the deep Gregorian chants sung by hundreds of voices; the music of the great organ; and, in the pauses of the music, the groaning and vibration of the iron spire above, as a violent squall howled through it as if it were some gigantic dissonant Æolian harp; combined to make a novel religious

ceremony trebly interesting and impressive. Yet, when many churches had been gone through that day, and several services witnessed, and portions of several sermons heard, as we sat, in the breezy bright evening, on the heights overlooking the Seine and the city, beside the too gorgeous little chapel of Our Lady of Bon Secours, Armstrong's feeling for art and for religious ceremonies had been fed to 'sick satiety.' Looking from the city, with its spires and clusters of houses, across to the broad meadows, and the dark masses of the Forest of Elbœuf, and the rolling hills beyond, he sighed once more for nature in her freedom, and a religion of worship which owns no form. He talked much on these themes, as we still sat gazing over that varied and noble prospect, and the crowd of holiday-folk passed up and down and around us scarcely heeded. It seemed to him so great a proof of human imbecility for men to set themselves to invent symbols of the power and glory of the Creator, and build up petty temples to worship them in—temples which are great and lovely only as they recall the forms and forces of Nature herself—while every hill and wood and mountain and tree and flower was a symbol of that glory and that power perpetually before them, and the universe itself a temple, wide and enduring, ever vaulted above their heads! And then he passed on to a comparison of the lot of nations, and thought how much happier

was that dear England across the sea than this bright cheerful-looking France, inasmuch as she had with a steadier and a surer step advanced from the thralldom of ceremonies and of forms. Such were some of the trains of thought suggested to him by his wanderings through Rouen, and the contemplation of that wonderful panorama from Bon Secours—thoughts of a kind which recurred to him again and again as he rambled on through the cities and fields of France. Something also of that deep melancholy which the presence of the works of past generations, of the manifestation of old ambitions, and (for them) the ineffectual labours of dead men, the ancient cities, the monuments of history, are all but too powerful in awakening, overclouded our hearts, looking down over Rouen that bright evening, and haunted us in our journey afterwards for days. . . .”

#### ROUEN TO LOUVIERS.

“ . . . It was snowing in the chill April morning when we left Rouen, eager for the woods and the fields again, and we passed through the orchards which stand between the high-road and the Seine, and came, with pleasant surprise, upon the Chapel of St. Adrien, carved out in the crags above the river. This peculiar little shrine was quite empty, and only a few workmen, who seemed to have been employed in patching up the artificial portion of

the roof, were within sight. We entered, and sang together Tennyson's 'Break, break, break,' to the deep minor music of Beethoven's Funeral Chant; a setting of Armstrong's invention; a song many a time sung by him and his companions among the Wicklow Mountains, of old. The effect of the mournful music, as it rang through the rocky vault of the dark chapel, was sweet and strange beyond all fancy . . . and I hope, if there was any sacrilege in the liberty thus taken by the youthful travellers, they may be pardoned by the faithful for an intrusion with which no irreverence was mingled. . . . Then we journeyed on to Pont-de-l'Arche, dined (chiefly on bread and apples), sitting on the many-buttressed bridge, and crossed the Seine towards the Forest of Elboeuf; entered the skirts of the Forest, and sauntered there, and rested a long, long time under the delicious pines; and arrived in the afternoon at the little town of Louviers.

"There, at the Hôtel du Mouton, recommended by a theatrical-looking wayfarer who passed us as we rested in the Forest, we paused; found it, according to our notions, unreasonably dear, and passed to a restaurant close beside the church, where we obtained an excellent apartment for 1 franc, 50 cents; and where, in the evening, we were enlivened by the conversation of some jolly artisans in the café, one of them, a particularly well-informed person, assuring the company that all Irishmen, at

all times, carried knapsacks on their backs (*'le sac comme cela'*) ; and endeavouring to impress upon us that his Majesty Napoleon III. had gone to England for a purpose which *he* alone of men could disclose, if he were not too prudent to betray the Emperor's confidences ; and where, at night, our slumbers were agreeably broken by the sound of 'the crack-pot melody of the Norman bells' from the clock-tower of the neighbouring church, to which Armstrong makes such affectionate allusion.<sup>1</sup> . . ."

#### LOUVIERS TO MANTES.

"From Louviers we started on the road to Mantes, intending to stop for the night at Vernon or Bonnières ; passed through an uninteresting, and by no means beautiful, district, which, however, an old woman, of whom we asked the way, insisted was '*un pays riant*'—a phrase which Armstrong now heard for the first time, and which quite captivated him. Gaillon was passed, and Vernon in due time reached ; but we were still tempted onwards. We walked along the Seine, talking dreamily, and stopped at a little *auberge* on a height, where we met a most interesting character, a Frenchman of the old school, who entertained us with narratives and *bon-mots* till we chose to depart. Bonnières is characterized in the rough Diary as a 'hateful hole.' It possessed no attractions for us, and we still kept

<sup>1</sup> See below, Letter of August 14, 1863.—ED.

on our way. There is something peculiarly tranquillizing and provocative of gentle musings in a walk by a broad river in the cool of evening. As we wandered along the Seine towards Mantes, home-thoughts came thronging upon us ; and a transient home-sickness was felt for perhaps the first time since we left Jersey ; and Armstrong here renewed old resolutions of self-devotion which he afterwards faithfully and completely carried out. After a walk of about twelve hours we arrived at Mantes. It was a long march for one who had been so recently a valetudinarian ; and now, for the first and last time during this expedition, he complained of stiffness of the joints. . . .”

#### MANTES TO VERSAILLES.

“But the next day’s journey was infinitely more trying. After inspecting the great Cathedral and other churches, we proceeded, as we were directed, towards the *Route de Quarante Sous*. The *Route de Quarante Sous* was a long hilly road, paved with huge stones, and in a deplorable state of neglect, no *cantonnier* having worked on it, apparently, for years. Walking on these stones, or rather, hopping from one to another, for a distance of over twenty miles, under a scorching sun, could hardly be called amusement.

“I suppose the agony of the movement, creating a desire to get a painful necessity over, drove us

forward with unusual speed ; but in the afternoon we caught sight of a long bright building, glittering among magnificent trees, in a vale below us ; and on inquiring of a little boy, who came by, what it was, were informed to our surprise, in a tone of extreme astonishment at our ignorance, that it was ‘*Le Palais*’—the Palace of Versailles ! Our hearts bounded in us ; and, hurrying down the field-path with a shout, we passed by an unfrequented gateway into the Park. A short walk brought us round the Trianon, to the Canal, and to the fountains.

“ Here, by the fountains of Versailles, we reposed ourselves, watching the spray spouting from the Tritons’ horns ; watching the soldiers and the burgesses as they sauntered along ; and listening to the woodpeckers on the high branches of the trees above us, tapping the dry and resonant wood. And then we rose, and passed by the labyrinths and the statues, and stood before the Palace itself. All this was very wonderful and very strange to us ; and the gay events of French history and the tragic pictures of the Revolution came thronging upon our minds in a wild Walpurgis-dream. . . .”

#### VERSAILLES.

“ . . . The common purse was by this time, as might be expected, running alarmingly low ; the most rigid economy had become necessary ; Armstrong’s watch had long since been parted with—at a sacrifice ;



we were preparing ourselves to face much hardship and discomfort rather than curtail our journey, or break our resolution by writing home for supplies. Arrived at the town of Versailles, we stopped at what appeared to be a respectable café-restaurant, and asked if we could get accommodation there for the night. We were somewhat chagrined when the landlord informed us that we could, but that we should have to sleep in a chamber with eight other men ! We were not quite prepared for this yet. As we were turning away rather hopelessly, a man rushed out of the café, and said that if we followed *him*, he would give us a room for a moderate sum. We accompanied him, not without suspicion ; and were agreeably surprised when, after we had passed the cavalry-barracks, we were shown into a pleasant courtyard, and then up a staircase, and into the cleanest, brightest, and most tasty of apartments. It seemed a magical rescue ; and we were able to sleep at peace after our two days' marches of unusual fatigue. . .

“In the morning we were awakened by the lively bugle-music of the Cuirassiers, and, looking out of window, saw the troops of horsemen marching by in all their glory. But it seemed to us that the gallant soldiers looked pale and sickly, and that the burthen of their armour was too heavy for their slight frames . . .”

Half the character of these wanderings would be

lost, if I did not acknowledge that by this time the travellers, as to their habiliments, were peculiarly weather-stained and out of repair. Though they had been each living at the average rate of 1 fr., 75 cents a-day, yet there was little surplus left to spend at the bootmaker's or the tailor's; and *imprimis*, their shoes were in a very precarious state. In this item the younger traveller presented perhaps the more noteworthy aspect of the two. The boots he had brought with him from Jersey had had to be discarded when he reached Avranches, and a pair of new shoes had been bought. This purchase diminished the general treasury by some twelve francs, *i.e.* bed and board for the two travellers for the space of four or five days. It also entailed considerable torture upon the younger traveller, while it tended to enhance the peculiarities of his attire. For the shoes were found to press inconveniently at so many points that slits had to be made all over them. So many openings, though affording agreeable ventilation in warm weather, yielded but poor protection against the rain, the gravel, and the dust. A pair of gaiters—still fondly preserved—were consequently made, the material being figured American cloth, and the workmanship the workmanship of the younger traveller; and these were worn over the apertures. Armstrong's pedal extremities were perhaps somewhat more substantially, if less picturesquely, protected. *Jolies bottes*

would cover a number of imperfections, if any existed, in the nether garments. But the travellers' coats were ineradicably stained and discoloured with the rain and the dust ; and their head-dresses were not of a kind which a Prince or a Prime Minister could wear of an afternoon in Rotten Row without attracting considerable attention.

In such plight it was somehow pleasanter to fraternize with soldiers and artisans than to come into contact with gentlemen, and more especially with gentlemen who were also fellow-countrymen. Accordingly, our travellers chose the former alternative, not without instruction accruing, and much intellectual gain. As they passed through the galleries of Versailles, and every now and then beheld their own reflections in the lofty mirrors, they could not repress a smile ; and one cruel *concierge*, addressing the younger traveller, and pointing, with an ironical leer, at his feet, exclaimed with something of severity—" Handsome boots those to walk through a Palace with !"—a truth which could not be gainsaid.

#### VERSAILLES TO PARIS.

" But now we were off to Paris," writes the individual so cruelly rebuked—" and we soon hailed with eager joy the dome of the Tombeau de l'Empereur rising over the multitudinous roofs . . . .

" We obtained a high room in a *hôtel garni*, in

the neighbourhood of the Rue Mont Parnasse—not far from M. St.-Beuve's old quarters—for one franc per night ; and all Paris was lying at our feet ! What could be more welcome to two young travel-stained pedestrians, with straitened purses, who had walked from the shores of the Côtentin, than such a refuge and such a goal as this ? . . .”

#### PARIS.

“No sooner” (the narrative proceeds) “had the first morning beams begun to shine through our little window, than we arose, and prepared ourselves to explore the wonderful city into which we had strayed.

“Sauntering down past the Hôtel des Invalides, and past the Palais Legislatif, we crossed the Seine, and found ourselves standing enraptured in the centre of the Place de la Concorde. On we wandered, through the Tuileries Gardens, through the Louvre Courts, over the Pont Neuf, past the Palais de Justice, and paused under the stern towers of Notre Dame.

“Having lunched upon bread and radishes—a slender meal—we ascended to the top of the Cathedral, and looked down upon and across the city, not without some slight feeling of disappointment, as we had expected a more imposing view ; but at the same time with profound and unwonted emotion. Descending, we proceeded towards Père la Chaise,

to visit the tomb of Héloïse and Abélard, without which our pilgrim-vows had been unfulfilled. With the view from Père la Chaise, of which we had heard much, we were likewise disappointed.

“As we continued to walk round and through the city, Armstrong more than once expressed his surprise at its appearance of newness. Of this he had had no anticipation whatever. His reading in history and romance had prepared him to find a venerable grey city of ancient buildings, dark corners suggestive of the atrocities of the Revolution, suspicious-looking archways, together with poverty, nakedness, and grime ; and the antique features of the towns and villages he had visited in Brittany and Normandy had contributed to heighten this expectation. But our first long walk through the streets and boulevards revealed nothing but brightness, cheerfulness, cleanliness, smart dresses, and buildings new from the mason’s hand. Napoleon III. and his Ministers were then at the height of their glory, and destruction and renovation were the order of the day. The paltry boscage of the Bois de Boulogne also disappointed him, for he looked for a foliage as majestic as that of Kensington. For the rest, the city and its surroundings afforded him immeasurable joy. The pictures, the antiquities, the chambers of the Louvre, could not be visited often enough to satisfy his eager appetite. The sombre magnificence of the interior

of Notre Dame was an object of deep veneration. All he saw charmed him, and set his imagination powerfully working . . .

“We would start out early in the mornings: breakfast on bread and chocolate at a neighbouring café; and then wander away; losing ourselves in the city; observing its life as closely as we might; visiting in their order the most remarkable places we had heard or read of; eating our scanty dinner wherever we happened to be able to get it on the most economical terms; and returning late to our lofty lodging at Mont Parnasse, fatigued and eye-sore, to wind up the evening with a supper of bread and *eau sucré*, or the more soothing luxury of a pipe.

“We went down into the cellars of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and ate our bowls of *riz-au-lait* among bricklayers, *chiffonniers*, hodmen, bloused *ouvriers* of every tribe; and, though we saw there many sullen and many excitable faces, and evidences enough of latent violence, yet all was order, decency, sobriety, and calm. I doubt if in London, in like society, there would have been so little to offend. I am certain that in Liverpool or in Dublin a similar position would be unbearable. But, then, we were mere boys, and came among them less with the appearance of spies, or intruders, or well-to-do citizens, than of humble wayfarers; and our presence was generally unnoticed among figures so many and so various. . .”

How deeply the life and scenes of Paris impressed themselves upon Armstrong's memory, and how clearly he caught their salient features, his own poems amply reveal. Could there be a much more felicitous picture of Paris and its people than this from *Ovoca* ?—

“ From the towers  
The vesper-bells were chiming, while the rose  
Of sunset blushed upon the brows of men  
And maidens decked in holiday attire ;  
These lounging in the palace's parterres,  
Careless and gay ; these kneeling in the aisles  
Of dim-lit churches, bowed in prayer, and lulled  
By rolling music, and the perfumed breath  
Of incense, and the chaunted liturgy  
Ill-comprehended. Others in the lawns  
Stood ravished with the warblings intricate  
Of painted Circes ; theirs the sacred aim  
Of homage to the goddess of the realm,  
Immortal Pleasure, with her hollow heart  
And mocking smile, holding with tremulous hand  
A chalice brimmed with death. A merry troupe  
Of dancers plied the soul-ennobling art  
Hight posture and deportment, on the sward  
Of green St. Cloud. The sun's descending beams  
Warmed with a purple majesty of light  
The Armida-bowers and watery displays  
Of Versailles and the faery Trianon,  
Where the bronze Neptune revelled in a cloud  
Of rainbow spray ; the Tritons blew their horns  
In spouted foam ; the Aphrodites showed  
Their marble charms in vases, statues, urns,  
To French Adonises, indifferent, proud,  
And dashing, as the youth whom Cypris wails.

And through the Wood of Boulogne chariots moved,  
 Flaunting with beauty and with millinery ;  
 And through the Arch of Triumph, which like gold  
 Glowed in the ruddy beam, a sparkling tide  
 Of splendour, middle-life, and squalor shoaled ;  
 And in the Fields Elysian you might see  
 Squalor and middle-life and splendour blent  
 In one bright, shifting crowd. And music breathed,  
 And wine was quaffed, here, in the gaudy tent,  
 There, in the buzzing café. Through all hearts  
 The same electric thrill of pleasure ran,  
 Like the delirium of a masquerade,  
 Or the Tarantula's blissful agony."

It was into a tide of gay life like this that the two travellers passed, on the bright and sunny afternoon of Easter Sunday, as they strolled up the Champs Élysées, and into the Bois de Boulogne, on their way to "green St. Cloud." And they presently found themselves the objects of considerable curiosity and inquisitive gazing. ". . Passers-by turned to look at us in the most unexpected manner; fair ladies seemed to lift their gold-rimmed eye-glasses, and lean forward in their carriages with embarrassing stare; and some persons of middle-rank even went so far as to stop us, and raising their hats, respectfully asked 'to what country we happened to belong.' This was a kind of notoriety for which we had not bargained. We had grown accustomed to one another's weather-beaten costume, and saw nothing now very peculiar about it; and, indeed, putting out of consideration



'*jolies bottes*', gaiters of American cloth, coats rather longer than usual in the tails and somewhat crumpled and faded, and hats of a Spanish guerilla cut, there was nothing about us, we thought, calculated to excite particular attention. We were sunburnt, but so was every pedestrian in Paris; and Armstrong still looked as 'fresh as a chicken' or a Norman; and if the face and forehead of his companion were as brown as mahogany, those of every Zouave that passed us were as black as the King of Dahomey's. Yet, when we did come to weigh the question with care, and, glancing at one another, recalled to memory certain prophetic descriptions in the *Destinies*,<sup>1</sup> the verification of the latter appeared so strikingly accomplished that we lost all remaining sense of propriety, and laughed out loudly in the midst of the throng. . . .

"But under the cool, spreading trees of St. Cloud we could be at peace. It was a beautiful evening, fresh, clear—the sky cloudless. The leaves were already thick on the wide-extending boughs. We stretched ourselves beneath them, and gazed down over the winding river, the woodlands, and the far domes and spires of the city, and mused and conversed in sweet tranquillity . . .

"As we wandered through the park, we came upon a Savoyard boy, with a harp, playing, and singing "Garibaldi's Hymn." French folk gathered

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 130.—ED.

round him, and some joined in the singing; and many sous were dropt into his tattered hat. The memory of the war of Italian independence was still fresh in all men's minds and hearts. We passed on, and found ourselves soon laughing at a group of extraordinary figures, cricketers apparently, but dressed more in the costume of English clowns. Then we listened for awhile to the band of a Voltigeur Regiment playing deliciously. And then we left the Park, and had to run the gauntlet of the Bois de Boulogne once more. This time we had the pleasure of seeing the Empress, then in the heyday of her beauty and prosperity. During our visit we saw also the Emperor Napoleon III., for our first and last time. . . .

"Thus we wandered about Paris and its neighbourhood for days, till we had seen nigh all its wonders . . .

" . . . . Sitting up in our little room in the *Hotel garni* at Mont Parnasse, or resting in the gardens of the Luxembourg or the Tuileries, we now earnestly debated what we were to do next. On a careful calculation it was found that the few francs that remained in our purses, if we started in a day or two from Paris, would, no mishap occurring, carry us back, by Liseux, Caen, Bayeux, and Coutances, to Granville, so as to catch the steamer for St. Helier by a certain specified day, and enable us to live during the journey on an average of 1 fr.

75 cents per diem ; and this would make it possible to examine the churches of Bayeux, St. Lô, and Coutances, which we had once much longed to see. On the other hand, Armstrong was strongly in favour of a proposed route by the Loire and Brittany, which would, no doubt, prove more beautiful and interesting. But the latter, it was argued, would occupy a much greater length of time, and where were the resources ? We might diminish our daily expenditure by about four or five sous, but we both felt that this would avail but little, and more than this appeared hardly possible. But the Loire route was particularly enticing, and it was not to be surrendered without much persuasion. Would it not be possible to *sing* our way for several days, and keep our small store of francs in reserve against the chances of hoarse throats and uncharitable districts in which vocal melody was at a discount ? Armstrong felt confident of the success of the expedient. Goldsmith and Holberg had accomplished longer journeys by dint of 'fluting and singing.' Why might not we help ourselves along by our united voices ? The love of adventure had grown by what it fed on, and we should have started for Orléans, if I had not begun to feel that I was taking upon myself a very serious responsibility ; and that, having regard to the main object with which my companion had left home in the previous October, the danger of over-fatigue and privation combined was too great to brave. With

much reluctance my less-pleasing counsels were approved ; and we turned our faces once more towards Normandy. . . . ”

#### A TRYING JOURNEY.

“ . . . Arriving one moonless, cloudy night, late, at Liseux, it was so pitchy dark in the lampless streets that, for some distance, we had to feel our way along the walls of the houses, like the blind. . . .

“ In the morning, when we left Liseux, the weather was beautifully fine, the sky clear and unclouded. We were rejoicing at the good fortune which attended us. At Estrées we stopped at an inn, to take our morning's repast, and remained there nearly two hours. On our setting out again, the sky was overcast, the weather had completely changed. Meeting an old shepherd, we sat down beside him to learn something of his occupation, and his views of life, and to smoke a pipe. We found him bitterly opposed to the existing Imperial régime ! When we got up, the wind had begun to blow in fitful squalls. As we proceeded, the squalls grew fiercer and fiercer, and the rain fell in wild driving showers. We slung our knapsacks on our sides ; put on our cloaks ; attempted to raise our umbrellas. In a moment Armstrong's umbrella was smashed to pieces, and disabled for ever. Never were there more pitiless rains or wilder blasts. It became very difficult to keep our feet, or to progress at all ; but

there was no shelter to be had, and we must needs go forward. For hours we were exposed to heavy torrents of cold rain, beating upon our faces, and driving in and up under our cloaks; and here and there the road was flooded half-way over our shoes. I now began to feel very uneasy about my companion, and rejoiced inwardly that my more timid counsels had prevailed, and that we had not attempted the Loire. I was surprised, however, to find that I was myself the one to break down. For when we arrived at Val-ès-Dunes, the scene of the defeat of the Barons by William in 1047, I felt myself completely routed, and succumbed at the pillar commemorating the Conqueror's victory. But I soon rallied again; and the appropriateness of the spot, and the absurdity of the contrast, and the pickle which we presented, standing there drenched and streaming with rain, only served to put Armstrong into one of his fits of uncontrollable laughter, in which I was soon compelled to join to agony. . . . Thus, in the condition of drowned rats, we made our way into Caen, and were received with lavish hospitality by the people of the Hôtel du Calvados, where we had stopped on our previous visit. . . ."

BAYEUX.

" . . Leaving Caen, with something of melancholy and a sinking of heart—for we had grown to love the

old town dearly—we set out for Bayeux, against a most tremendous gale. Straining on against this hurricane—from which, for breathing time, we sought refuge, wherever we could, in wayside cottages—we passed, says the Diary, ‘through a most uninteresting country all planted with colza,’ to Bayeux. At St. Martin-des-Entrées we met a noble specimen of a burly Norman peasant, who directed us to the Hôtel du Lion d’ Or, where, for a franc, we obtained a bed-room to which the approach was from the outside of a courtyard, up a flight of rickety steps—a most outlandish place . . .

“The stern old towers and spires of Bayeux Cathedral, so very weather-marked and storm-blown, and the noble Norman arcades in the nave within, evoked Armstrong’s admiration; and a long time was spent in quiet examination of the tapestry in the Museum—to which the custodian gave us access after hours, from sheer goodnature. No town we had visited seemed to bear such striking marks of age as Bayeux; and there was something solemn about the silence and emptiness of the streets, which wafted the imagination easily back into the long-buried past. . . .”

#### BAYEUX TO ST. LÔ.

“It was now necessary to push forward, as a single day’s loss would cause us to miss the steamer at Granville, and detain us at that town several days

in a state of want; so next morning we walked through a lovely country of hill and dale—in its conformation much resembling in some places the island of Jersey—on our way to St. Lô. This walk led us through the old Forest of Cerisy, which we left the highroad to wander in; and, after spending a happy dreamful day, we arrived at the picturesque town of St. Lô. . . .”

#### COUTANCES CATHEDRAL.

“The following day, after sauntering through the wooded glens of St. Lô, and examining the Cathedral, with its handsome perforated spires, we continued our journey to Coutances; and, on mounting a long hill, in the course of the afternoon, beheld once more the beloved sea, and with a shout of ‘*βάλαττα, βάλαττα*’, hurried joyfully down into the little town. . . .

“In the evening, we went searching for the sacristan, to show us to the top of the Cathedral. Armstrong having knocked loudly at several doors, at last a woman put her white-capped head out of a high window—‘*Que cherchez-vous, Messieurs?*’—‘I look for the sacristan, Madame: where is he?’—‘*I, gentlemen,*’ cried the dame, ‘am *he!*’—The old lady then showed us half-way up the steps to the central tower, accompanied by an old man, a hatter, who had come back, after a long absence, to visit

his native town of Coutances ; and then she gave us the keys, and allowed us to continue the ascent alone—a pleasant luxury.

“ When we reached the summit, a fairer sight than we could well have hoped for greeted us. Miles of green fields and woodland stretched to east and south ; but below us was the sea ; and, out to westward, right between the two spires, was the sombre purple outline of Jersey, and the sun going down in glory behind it. Just then, as we gazed, the bells struck the hour for retiring ; and startled at the sound, the daws swung themselves out of their nests, circled with their black wings against the sunset sky, cawed loudly, and then settled themselves for the night ; and the sun went down, and the sea darkened. And as we leaned over the parapet, still looking silently towards the lingering light, and the fading outline of the little Isle, we thought how many times we had gazed in longing at the triple towers of this very Cathedral, far away, from the hills of Jersey, when they seemed like the symbol of distant cities and of foreign lands ; and now we had journeyed far, and seen strange cities, and were standing among the towers themselves, gazing across the waters towards the heights of Jersey, with the sun setting over them in splendour—fit and beautiful ending to our happy wanderings ! . . . At last we moved slowly away, passed down the tower-steps, and stole around the ‘friars’-



walks,' peering down into the silent, empty, dark Cathedral—and then it was time to go. . .”

COUTANCES TO GRANVILLE.

“From Coutances we started off on our last walk together in France. We were very needy, and were obliged to higgler for our breakfasts ! When we were informed, somewhat scornfully, that ‘no one *ever* bargained for a *cup of coffee*,’ Armstrong replied that ‘circumstances had conspired to render us an exception to the rule !’

“We had to separate before we had covered a third of the way ; for Armstrong was temporarily indisposed, and we agreed that it was better he should go on by public *voiture*, which he very reluctantly did. . .”

So the younger traveller trudged along for awhile in the wake of two wandering musicians, with a harp and a violin, which they carried alternately ; their life and habits interested him. Then he overtook them, and paced on alone. In the evening, as he passed up the street of Granville, tired and hungry, and longing much to see his companion, and not knowing where to find him, a voice from a balcony of an inn suddenly shouted to him in joyous accents,—“*Monsieur, Monsieur, votre frère est ici !*” It was a good-natured *garçon*, who had been set to watch for him . . . When will such a merry greeting ever gladden him again ? . . .

“The unfortunate necessity of falling back upon the *voiture* had deprived us of our dinner and supper for that evening. But we were able to purchase a couple of sea-biscuits, which served to keep off hunger ; and we went out, and had an hour’s conversation on the cliffs with a pleasant-faced *douanier*, who surprised us not a little by showing that he was intimately acquainted with the personal history of Victor Hugo, and by telling us that he had read many of that author’s works, with the names of which he seemed quite familiar.”

#### RETURN TO JERSEY.

“... Next morning ” (the narrator winds up), “having divided our remaining biscuit, and eaten it by way of breakfast, we went aboard the little steamer *Comète*, and were recognized by the sailors and the steward, and regarded by them in the light of heroes. Since they had seen us, we had walked about five hundred miles.

“The steward who was an Irishman—and an O’Flaherty—generously assured us, when we unfolded to him the consequences of travelling on scanty supplies, that even if we had not had sufficient money to pay our fare *then*, he would have trusted us to pay it some other time. When we *had* paid it, we had still some coppers over. With these we arrived at St. Helier. We had left the Island with

about seven pounds. We landed now with exactly three sous. With such a residuum we could scarcely be regarded as bankrupt.

“But we had carried out our resolution, and we had reaped pleasure and wisdom worth coffers of gold; and perhaps the most precious of our gains was a knowledge of the hearts of the very humblest men, and a livelier sympathy with their lot.”

## CHAPTER XIV. 1862, ÆT. 20—21.

S\*\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*\*\*.—Last Farewell to Jersey.—London.—A Vanished Dream.—Westminster Abbey.—Letter XXX.: *Altered Enjoyment of Nature*.—In the North of Ireland.—Description of Temporary Home.—Letters XXXI. and XXXII.: *Life at T—*.—The Growth of a Creed.—Christ the Divine Master.—Letter XXXIII.: *Inquiry renewed*.—Letter XXXIV.: *Inability to realize Personal Benefits from the Life and Passion of Christ*.—Back in Wicklow; Lugnaquilla; “Allan’s Glen;” Ovoca; Avondale.—In the North again.—“Stories of Wicklow.”—“The Dargle.”—Letter XXXV.: “*Glandalough: A Story of Wicklow*.”—Letter XXXVI.: “*Stories of Wicklow; Irish Character; Generous Aims*.”—Letter XXXVII.: *Exalted State of Mind and Emotion; Philanthropic Design*.—Letter XXXVIII.: *The Church as an Instrument of Good*.—Letter XXXIX.: *Poems recently written*.—Letter XL.: *Longings for Jersey*.—Letter XLI., XLII., XLIII.: “*Suspiria*.”—Letter XLIV.: *Criticisms of “Glandalough;” Poets of the Day; Religion*.—Visit to Lough Erne.—Death of a Dear Relative.—Letter XLV.: *Tribute to the late Col. A. B. Armstrong; Immortal Hope*.—Realism in Poetry.—A Tentative Poem.—In Trinity College again.—Letter XLVI.: *A Fall on the Ice; G. B\*\*\*\*\*; Remorseful Reflections*.—Commentary of his Old Friend.—Letter XLVII.: *An Ideal Poem*.—Letter XLVIII.: *The Poem and the Novel*.

**I**N Jersey Armstrong now remained just long enough to get his books and papers together, and take leave of his friends. But this leave-taking was

nor was the Island quitted again  
 His kind old friend, his "Jersey  
 delighted to call himself, was among  
 came down to see him off; and as the  
 were borne out of the harbour and away,  
 at figure they descried was that of the poor  
 grey-haired man, waving sorrowful adieus, stand-  
 ing there sadly and alone. . . Kind, merry, genial,  
 warm-hearted S\*\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*\*\*, you too have vanished  
 from this world of beauty and of pain, and sleep,  
 beside the faithful companion of your varied years,  
 under the flowery turf of the little Island you so  
 strangely loved ! . .

And beautiful it was, that little spot of Norman  
 ground, though perhaps much changed even in the  
 few years that have since passed by. . . . "Beauti-  
 ful when the hot mists of summer brooded around  
 its lonely bays, or while its splintered crags bore  
 the buffets of tumultuous seas ; beautiful when the  
 winds of autumn rustled in the withering leaves, or  
 when the trees were shattered by the rough blasts of  
 winter ; beautiful when the bounteous hands of  
 spring began to scatter the tremulous snowdrop,  
 the gold-crowned daffodil, and the yellow lily  
 among its winding valleys, or when the mower  
 whetted his glittering scythe in the midst of its  
 rich, sweet-smelling meadowlands ; beautiful when  
 its orchards stood clothed in one mantle of pale  
 pink flowers, or when their boughs were bent be-

neath their weight of ruddy fruitage; beautiful when the great round sun of morning tinted its fields with crimson hues, or when he shed his last golden beams upon its undulating hills, and sank (as we have so often watched him from some fair height) into the rosy western sea ! But all the more beautiful did it seem, with its crumbling chapels and antique manor-houses, with its orchards and meadows, its ruined castles and secluded coves, its deep-wooded valleys and labyrinthine paths, because looked upon and admired along with those whom we esteemed as friends. What sweet indescribable sadness lingers about the memory of days of happiness spent with those who are absent, scattered among the throngs of countless men, unseen, unheard ! Such are days which cannot be forgotten, though the dearest friends be separated by oceans and continents, and though the long, long years roll on in rapid cycles, each bearing in its train new sorrows and new joys. . . .”

So mused the travellers, as they leaned over the bulwarks of the ship, and, gliding round the coasts, pointed out spot after spot where happy hours had been spent during their nigh two years' sojourn there—craggs which they had scaled together : headlands on whose edges they had sat, discoursing together delightful or full solemn themes, or chanting wild songs of their own mountains, or building up visions of distant travel and high ambitious

schemes ; scenes, too, made sweet with silvery laughter and the mirth of young unclouded hearts.

And yet to Armstrong, returning, vigorous, healthy, with imagination enriched, with intellect matured, to the race which he had thought, for a time, had been lost for ever, regrets such as these were as nothing beside the joy of life renewed and a future of glorious activity. And as he passed away across the blustering Channel, he could not help contrasting, with something of elation, his prospects now with his sunless, hopeless outlook as he journeyed homeward but a year before.

His route lay through London, which he had not visited since he was but ten years of age. His stay there now was occupied in walking all over it, from end to end, and visiting in quick succession those places which were most sacred in his imagination and memory. His early impressions of London were, as I have said, of the rosiest colour. The whole city had become like an enchanted vision to him, of which he would speak rapturously, as of something more strange and fair than aught he had ever seen from the hand of painter, or read of in romance or fairy-tale. One of the first spots which he now sought was London Bridge. He stood there a long time, gazing up and down the river in silence, and a sadness and a deep gloom seemed gradually to spread over his face, which could seldom hide the feelings within ;

and at last he broke out suddenly, turning away as he spoke—"My dream is vanished : all this is utter ugliness !"—No doubt his mind had been thinking back upon the Seine, and the Tuileries, the Place de la Concorde, and Notre Dame. But there was one place at least the love of which was in no way damped—Westminster Abbey. It, too, had haunted him ever since his childhood, and he had addressed more than one sonnet to it, as it came back flashing upon his mind's eye in all its stately beauty. As he now entered its portals, and stood among its statues and monuments, while the choristers were chanting, and the music of the great organ was surging to the vaulted roofs, such a sudden tide of reflections, recollections, emotions, imaginings swept over him, that he turned as white as the marble effigies around him, and reeled out swooning, into the air. Yet this was the stout lad who had just walked his four or five hundred miles, almost without cessation, and had never drooped in his journey for weariness once !

He had no sooner arrived at home than he was off to ramble in his old haunts in Wicklow again, and presently he writes to his friend describing his new sensations :—

LETTER XXX. (*To G. B.*)—"Kingstown [*Date wanting*].—We had a beautiful walk yesterday through the grand old mountains and solitary glens which imparted some of their darkness to our child-



hood. It was a gloomy day, and our hearts beat with something of the old romance as we looked upon the Waterfall, Glencree, and Powerscourt ; but alas ! we gazed with the eye of a connoisseur, not now of a lover. . . . Yet, if we can no longer go mad, like Endymion, in the presence of beauty, we have, perhaps, found a higher treasure in the calm delight with which we regard it now. I would fain believe that we have found a key to the volume of Nature, which was written in an unknown language before. . . .—E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

His intention in returning to Ireland had been, primarily, to continue his course of studies in Dublin University—no longer seeking honours, as at first, but leisurely keeping his terms by examination. Almost immediately on his arrival a tuition in one of the northern counties, under agreeable circumstances, was offered him, and he was strongly recommended by his college Tutor to accept it. After some consideration he resolved to do this, and it was regarded as a wise resolution, as it would take him away from the old arena, and insure his living in a bracing country-air, apart from the temptation to hard study, which the proximity of the University would infallibly present. He left Kingstown, therefore, towards the close of June ; and with his journey northward he was not much charmed :—“ I must say,” he wrote to his mother, “ that I am mightily disappointed with the North of

Ireland. . . . Such a succession of bleak, barren, ragged swamps, moors, and bogs I could hardly have conceived to exist on this earth. Louth is most detestably ugly ; the Mourne Mountains are very picturesque, but scraggy ; Down is pretty fair ; and from Portadown to C——e. . . ough ! mountains, moorlands, wildernesses !” But with the house which opened hospitable doors to receive him, and with its friendly inmates, with whom he was now to associate for several months to come, he was more than pleased. “ This place is about the prettiest on the line of railway from Dublin, with the single exception of Newry, which lies at the bottom of a deep vale, backed by the peaks and rugged scalps of the Mourne and Carlingford Mountains . . . The grounds are beautifully laid out around the house, which is situated on the top of a hill, and embosomed in elegant gardens and groves. The rhododendron is in full bloom on every bed in the demesne, and there is a pond in the grounds, with two good-sized islands, which are literally ablaze with these beautiful flowers. As an index of climate, I may add that the laburnums are in their freshest bloom about here, while in Wicklow they are everywhere out of flower. . . . This place in which I am now writing is more like the ‘ Little Dargle ’<sup>1</sup> than any other place I know. There is a dark romantic

<sup>1</sup> A picturesque demesne on the slopes of the Dublin Mountains.—ED.

glen, with a mountain-torrent roaring down through it, like the 'Little Dargle' exactly. The glen is at one side of the house, and the tiny lake, with its islets, on the other." And a further description occurs in his next letter, written in the highest spirits, to his old correspondent:—

LETTER XXXI. (*To G. A. C.*)—"T—, June 30, 1862.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—Here I am, in the midst of brown mountains and black moorlands, leisurely imparting the elements of Greek and Latin to three of the most hearty, gentlemanlike, and intelligent young fellows I could wish to associate with. T— covers some forty acres of woodland and ornamental pleasure-grounds, intersected by dark mountain-glens, like those in Killakee, and bounded on all sides by black frowning mountains—O Styx and Pyriphlegethon, how black! Their very names are terrific, and smack of the Bottomless Pit—Thunderbolt Pool, the Devil's Hoofs, Creggan-de-vesky, and Creggan-gon-rò! You will say this ought to inspire me with poetic feeling, if anything can do so now. Ah my friend, it's all over with me, the 'fitful fever' has gone by! I have imbibed a taste for sport! I shoot rabbits at six o'clock every morning, and fish a great part of the day! Farewell poetic dreams and spasmodic attempts to versify them! Farewell melodious rhythms and rhyming-dictionaries! When you see me next, I shall have lost the very last ethereal particle that remains in my

constitution, and you will hear, instead of mystified and balbutient reminiscences of a few commonplace books, nothing but narrations of encounters with otters, pheasants, hares, rabbits, trout, salmon, woodcock, and snipe.—Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

And again, in the same strain of merriment, exaggeration, and banter, he describes his new life to his earlier friend :—

LETTER XXXII. (*To G. B.*)—“ *T*——, *June* 30, 1862. . . . Here I am, sir, teaching the rudiments, for three or four hours every morning, in a big library, in the centre of a big house, surrounded by as lovely a pleasure-ground as ever gladdened a poet’s or country-lordling’s eye ; and the rest of the day either driving, or walking, or fishing, or shooting, or rowing about on one of the thousand-and-one lakes among the dark mountains around me, that stretch, from the distance of a bowshot from the house, to Lough Neagh, on one side, and the Mourne, Fermanagh, Donegal, and Derry Mountains, on the others. . . . I have killed more than two birds with one stone by coming down here—and what’s more, I kill rabbits every morning, and, if I don’t kill myself, I’ll see you in October. Write, old fellow. . . . Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

The last injunction was peremptory to all his correspondents—“ Write—write—write—unless you want me to jump into the pond or suspend myself from one of the fir-trees.”

The letter to his friend G. A. C., just quoted, was the recommencement of the correspondence, begun in Jersey in the winter of 1861, and suffered to flag all through the winter of that year and the spring of 1862. It was now continued, with but little interruption, for a whole year.

His searching and anxious inquiry, aided by constant controversy with this seldom-seen good friend, in 1861, had resulted, as it has appeared, in his acceptance of the main body of the New Testament as historically true, from his total inability to upset the accumulated historical evidences which came before him ; in his acceptance, consequently, of the doctrine of the divine emanance of Jesus Christ ; and in his determination to work out, as far as possible, in his own life, the leading practical lessons of Christianity. The story of Christ's life and passion, divested of the absurdities which his childish fancy had imputed to it, with the dross of vulgar theory and interpretation utterly purged away, had assumed gradually, from the alchemy of his own wealthier imagination and riper emotions, new and fascinating beauty. The magnificent poetry of the Old Testament, the pathetic language of the New, read, as they had been, not unfrequently, and yet oftener quoted and talked over, amid glorious scenes of nature, and thus, by association and suggèstion, intensified and sublimated, had imparted to that story and that character a dazzling auriòle, and

drawn towards them his involuntary adoration, his voluntary love.' But though his imagination was thus charmed, and his feelings subdued and softened, by contemplation of the sublime Vision, yet so complete had been his unbelief, that it was hardly possible in the true sense of belief to rebelieve; and it appealed to him more as the gorgeous creation of a mighty poet or painter than as an actual event occurring in the every-day life of men. Of this he was conscious, and he was conscious also of an approach to a more practical faith, when a remonstrance and a warning from his friend called forth the following confessions :—

LETTER XXXIII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"T—, July 8, 1862. . . . I have unfortunately lost your letter before being able to peruse it a second time, but I shall not easily lose the spirit of it. I agree with you perfectly that I have been treading in the flowery paths beneath a terrible volcano, in dallying with the awful story of God's wrath and its mystic propitiation as [with] a beautiful poem, while the restless fire that still preys upon my soul warns me to look for truth, historic truth alone, and to be satisfied with that only. A beautiful *theory*, forsooth ! Ah, my friend, I begin to see by little and little that the agony of Gethsemane and the piercing death-cry that shook the darkened air when the crucified God suffered the last extremes of torture, to take away the mysterious curse from our race,—I begin to

see faintly that all this was no comedy for the dilettante to honour with his feeble applause, but a very awful tragedy in which I myself have taken part, a history dyed in blood, of which my own soul forms one of the gloomiest and most revolting pages. Would to God I could do more ! Would to God I could walk and talk with Christ in the garden of His faith, that I could feel indeed and in truth and for ever and ever that *I* too have been bought with the price divine, that *I* too have been united to Him by His sacred blood, a brother of the meek and lowly Jesus, a son of the Father of Christ ! For this high destiny, promised to all believers, I yearn—but at intervals and feebly ; and the consciousness that I have not yet attained it produces a cynical lethargy of soul and intellect more hopeless than the fiercest throes of scepticism. I know what you mean. Help me by the force of your understanding, and the adamant strength of purpose which you possess. I may perhaps help you by the natural warmth of my feelings and sympathies—perhaps I may drag you down by the dross of my less ethereal nature. At all events, in God's name, let us pull together once more. I agree with you that we should be false to the earliest promise of our friendship, if we gave over for one moment now the half-successful struggle to ascend, hand in hand, along ' the great world's altar-stairs, that slope through darkness up to God.' Let us struggle on

henceforth manfully and prayerfully. I am *not* contented with a critical view of the delights of Paradise from the barren mountain-tops of Pisgah."

LETTER XXXIV. (*To G. A. C.*)—"T—, *July 17, 1862. . . .*" I was glad to get your letter, this morning, but I must confess I was disappointed with its tenour. If sympathy is all *you* want, I require far more. At the same time, I am far from depreciating the value of a cordial mutual understanding, and a warm desire of mutual benefit. But if this be all you promise to give me, I tell you plainly that I shall not be satisfied.

"It seems to me that you don't half comprehend the character, or want of character, which distinguishes your friend and humble servant, or that, if you do comprehend it, you are either too kind to show your knowledge of it, or too enthusiastic to permit yourself to dwell upon its weak points, which, I aver, are its principal and most unmistakable features. . . .

"I will just give you an outline of what I believe myself to be, in order that you may clearly apprehend the reasons of my present disquietude. Between you and me there is a great gulf fixed. You are aiming steadily and determinedly at a sublime purpose, and you only need the tight grasp of a friend's hand and the approving smile of friendly eyes to raise your flagging spirits in the midst of difficulty and peril. I am pursuing the



same high purpose, no doubt; but it flickers and dances before my inconstant eyes like a will-o'-the-wisp, while it shines before your steady gaze with the clear and fixed radiance of the day-star. You are advancing with resolute step to the city which hath foundations; while I am setting myself half-crazed by the occasional pursuit of a Proteus. With sorrow and shame I write it, our characters are totally antipodal, while our object is one and the same. It is not sympathy that I require. Let him who *can*, sympathize with Endymion in his love of an ideal which it is utterly hopeless for him ever to realize. Let him who can, sympathize with Pygmalion in his passion for a statue, if he is utterly unable to breathe the warmth of life into the rigid limbs, or cause the marble bosom to heave with the sighs of reciprocated love. But who will feel for an Endymion with an *ephemeral* passion, or a Pygmalion who plays fast and loose with a mild and transitory affection?

“There can be no sympathy for such as I, and the bestowal of commiseration would be utterly useless. On the contrary, like the brainsick hero of Disraeli's celebrated tale, I must have the assistance of an angel, or I shall sink to the level of a satyr.

“Tell me in the burning eloquence of conviction, that you are commissioned by the Maker of Heaven and Earth—and no poetic idealization of a God—to inspire me with a vigour which I never possessed,—

to kindle within my soul a flame which has never burned, but only sparkled and smouldered to show me what might be,—to dispel this dizzy intoxication from my brain, and to convert what seems to me at times a beautiful poetic trance, a ravishing dream of love glowing with all the witchery of a *houri* in Paradise, into the solid reality of what I touch and see in broad daylight around me, into such a reality that I can never dare to doubt it—tell me this, with solemnity and earnestness, and you will do more for me than I can ever hope to do for you ; you will pluck a burning brand from the fire, you will rescue a guilt-polluted soul from lower depths than you have ever imagined.

“Do you understand these words? Have I succeeded in making myself appear to you in my true colours, and is your heart sufficiently subdued by their more than Tartarian gloom? Do you know that the more I look upon this rottenness within me, the more inclined do I feel to listen to a whisper which has pursued me of late, and which bids me sink into that lethargy of despair which I fear has begun to corrode the once bright spirit of our dearest friend? Selfish, frivolous, I am beginning to lose all my self-respect in the occasional contemplation of that spotless purity which should bind even the vilest of sinners in ties of brotherhood and friendship.—I can never be a fit companion for Him who endured for me the agony of Gethsemane. . .

“ Were this feeling only perpetual, and not fleeting and transient as a morning vision, I might hope that it were the prelude of that ineffable bliss when one believes that every one on earth is a mighty deathless spirit, and when the eternal happiness of heaven commences with the recognition of the fact.

“ Another thing I want, and I feel the want deeply. . . . . But alas ! . . . I am only your frivolous and selfish friend, EDMUND JOHN ARMSTRONG.”

Shortly after this letter was written, he received a note from his fellow-traveller through France, telling him that he and his two chief friends were about to make an excursion through the higher mountain-ranges of Wicklow, after the old fashion ; and longing for his company. He packed his knapsack, took the earliest train to Dublin, and arrived at home, to the surprise and delight of his friends, the evening before the appointed day. And a glorious “raid” they had of it. One day was spent in climbing Lugnaquilla, the monarch of the Wicklow hills, and wandering about the magnificent glens around his feet. Armstrong was greatly impressed on this occasion by the noble cliffs over Aughavanagh and Imahl, and the Glen of the Horse (or “Rebel’s Glen”)—the valley into which, it is said, an outlaw, riding in terror from his pursuers, plunged headlong from the crags on the frantic horse whose

progress he could not stay. The scenery around Lugnaquilla, and more especially that of the wild torrent-riven glen into which the mule-path, leading from Glenmalur to Imahl, dips before it winds to the top of the pass, is vividly recalled by the description of the lonely wastes through which Allan,

“Driven by an impulse wild and terrible,” wanders, in the storm-scene of *Ovoca*.

Ah me, what rapturous glad hours were spent among those rocky solitudes ! The expedition was wound up with a day of peaceful saunterings in the Vale of Ovoca, ending in a walk, in the cool summer evening, through leafy Avondale, a glen of exceeding beauty ;<sup>1</sup> and no dream of Arcady could have been more lovely than those woods of Avondale then, backed by the mellow lingering light of sunset, pavilioned by the blue and spangled skies. Armstrong returned to the North, laden with sweets, like a bee from the meadows. “ I have a good deal to do just at present,” he wrote to his friend, Mr. C\*\*\*\*\*, on the 30th ; “so I am unable to

<sup>1</sup> Much spoilt by a railway, like many another lovely spot. God grant that sacred little realm of Wicklow may be no further defaced by bungling engineers, and dull-eyed speculators trading for their own profit on our love of nature ! There will come a day, perhaps, when the want of beauty will not be compensated by swift locomotion, or even by pure drinking-water. The Dargle as it is to-day, with the Dublin water-pipes on their hideous bridge, and a red Cockney-villa perched upon the green slopes, is a sight enough to make a strong man weep.—ED.

write you as long a letter as I could wish. But I am beginning to look back with affectionate regret on the golden hours we spent on Lugnaquilla, and in the Vale of Ovoca; and before long I shall be obliged to seek refuge in letter-writing from the gloom of loneliness which I see looming at no great distance. Till then, adieu !”

The “affectionate regret” with which he looked back upon that much-loved mountainland, soothed itself meanwhile in another way. He was soon busy writing one of a proposed series of “Stories of Wicklow,” which, as the poem entitled *The Dargle*, was presently sent for scrutiny and criticism to the one person who in all the world shared most largely, perhaps, his tastes and aspirations. “This story of the Lovers’ Leap,” he wrote, “was suggested to me by a . . . dream which I built up for my own amusement, one lovely evening in the summer of the present year [1862], as I sat alone on the magnificent cliff that frowns above the Glen of the Dargle, and reviewed the changes which had passed over my life since my last visit to the scenes of my early boyhood.”

He was always supremely happy when occupied with such exhilarating work; and his letters, as his conversation, however serious their theme and however earnest the feeling which prompted them, were at such a time mingled with an unrestrained frolic and jocosity which the pharisaical puritan or blood-

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perhaps regard with horror, but nevertheless so essentially a distinguish-  
his nature—and a right manly and  
symptom too—that they must not be kept  
out of sight; and the following letters written in  
his most familiar style, notwithstanding their appa-  
rent levity, are the exponents of steady resolutions  
and of sentiments most deeply cherished. The  
allusion in the first is to a ballad called the *Maid  
of Avondale*, the work of another, an inspiration of  
the recent Wicklow walks, for which he had asked,  
and to the catastrophe of his own *Dargle*; and  
the title of the former will explain his reason for  
warning the author off his “preserves.” The next  
contains his statement of *his* side of a compact,  
warmly ratified, which death alone dissolved.

LETTER XXXV. (*To \*\*\*\*\**.) — “*T——*,  
*August 20, 1862. . . .* I give you notice that I have  
commenced a second ‘legend,’ named *Glandalough*,  
and that my third will be named *\*\*\*\**, and so  
on till I have enwreathed every celebrated spot  
in that lovely county ‘with songs like garlands’  
(see my original programme in the address to  
G. A. C.). So don’t poach on these preserves,  
like a good poetaster.

There must be no more jumping down from cliffs  
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore.  
There’s three of them alreddy’s been and gone  
And done it. Three. Let be. The charm’s wound up.”

LETTER XXXVI. (To \*\*\*\*\*.)—"T——,  
 August 23, 1862. . . . I should certainly prefer, and  
 I think you would too, that our efforts should be  
 directed in a common cause—the cause of our  
 noble, warm-hearted, enthusiastic, priest-ridden, buf-  
 fooned, novelist-and-caricaturist-bedevelled, damned,  
 unfortunate fellow-countrymen. . . . The fact is  
 I sat up all last night, smoking, and listening  
 to and telling ghost-stories, with gentlemen, foot-  
 men, and gamekeepers, and spent the whole of this  
 day on the heather, in similar company, so that I  
 am not wholly responsible for what I am writing;  
 and, upon that reflection, and in consequence of  
 utter weariness, I shall postpone the continuation  
 of this letter till to-morrow morning. . . .

"*Quisquis erit vitæ, scribam, color.* We must  
 publish our first volume together . . . . And it  
 won't consist of delicious tit-bits of old-world ro-  
 mance neither. We shall have romance enough in  
 it, God knows. I will complete the tale of my  
 legends, and you may write dozens more of soul-  
 elevating romances of the old school for awhile,  
 just to get our hands into working-order. But then,  
 . . is there no poetry in the beggar and the workhouse,  
 in the fetid dens of the Liberties,<sup>1</sup> in the whisky-  
 shop, in the harlot's hell, in the rich man's castle,  
 in the poor man's hovel? . . . . We must strip off

<sup>1</sup> Filthy purlieus of Dublin, often explored in his childhood.  
 See above, p. 10.—ED.

the mask that converts the Irishman into a drivelling buffoon, and show him as he is,—noble, yet ignoble ; his mirth a bitter satire on what he knows to be wrong and wretched ; his apparent want of moral sense, the paralysis of it inflicted by long years of degradation and misunderstanding. I tell you, our own writers are our greatest foes. Instead of showing our poor countrymen the way to mend, they turn them into incarnate fiends by representing them as clowns and harlequins—as they are, no doubt, but miserable and noble men beneath the paint and the forced jest. . . . . I have written four hundred lines of *Glandalough*. St. Kevin's Bed is the only thing belonging to him or his magnificent story (which Moore has mauled . . . .) that I have introduced. The poem will be finished in about four or five days. Meantime, trigonometry, &c., are going to the deuce."

The resolution which is the main theme of this letter, is more sedately, and, perhaps, cautiously, conveyed in his letters to his old correspondent.

LETTER XXXVII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"T—, August 31, 1862.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I presume that my brother has long ago given you my message, to the effect that I did not intend to write to you until I thought that by so doing I could benefit either you or myself. I now write in the hope of conferring a benefit on myself, by working off a great many thoughts which I have as yet communicated to no one. . . .



“ The poetic handling which I once applied to religion has become absorbed in a firm practical belief in the presence of God in everything I see or hear or touch, a state of mind which I have explained in a poem I have just finished, and as I have no other words in which I could be contented to explain it, you will not attribute it perhaps to vanity if I quote the passage. . . .

[*He then quotes some of the closing lines of the poem “ Glandalough,”*<sup>1</sup> *and continues—*] These halting verses and weak words describe my present state of mind. I have indeed found a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And I cannot rest content without imparting, or striving to impart, it to others. . . . I cannot believe it right to remain in my present state of passive submission to a flood of magnificent emotions. . . .

“ *One* thing I believe I can do and I must do. I am placed by the circumstance of my birth in a country which is rotten to the core, a country which is justly the scoff of the whole world. If there is any possibility of improving its miserable condition by honestly and earnestly writing poems which may elevate and purify the besotted souls of its inhabitants, with God’s help I will endeavour to do it. . . .

“ I pray that I may strive for use rather than for fame, and that the inconstancy which is a part of my nature may vanish away before the new sense

<sup>1</sup> See “ Poetical Works ” (New Edition), p. 125.—ED.

of duty which has dawned in my spirit, nerving it with a strength unknown before, and infusing into it a desire (which I hope may be lasting) to do all, whatsoever I do, to the glory of God.

“Have I made myself out to be a perfect saint? Alas !”

In this mood he had begun to entertain favourably a proposition which had been frequently recommended to him in previous years, and as frequently rejected. His father had long grieved inwardly over the doubts and unbelief which he had striven hard, but in vain, to hide from him. His ~~wish~~ wish was that his eldest son should enter Holy Orders; but it was one of his principles to give him the widest liberty to choose the lines of his own career, and ~~he~~ he had in this instance used no pressure beyond the occasional expression of a hope—which in Armstrong’s case, however, was the strongest pressure he could possibly have applied. But a near kinsman, promising to reserve for him a living which lay in his gift, had frequently endeavoured to use a more decided persuasion; which had been respectfully, but firmly, repelled. There were, therefore, under these circumstances, potent reasons why, if he found it within the bounds of conscience, Armstrong, constrained to select *some* profession, should now incline his choice in this particular direction. He felt indeed that his views, different though they were from what they had been, were

by no means, in a strict sense, orthodox ; nay, that there were some important articles of the religion by law established which he still openly disavowed ; and he felt also that with certain ceremonies, forms, and fashions of the Church he had little sympathy. Still there was then a party in the Church of England, represented by such men as the late Canon Kingsley, Mr. F. Denison Maurice, or the present high-minded Dean of Westminster, in which he believed he could conscientiously enrol himself. He believed, further, at this time, that it was better to *enlarge* the citadel of religion from within, than to assail it from without, or even stand aloof from it altogether—enlarge it perhaps till its walls were as wide and as comprehensive as those of the universe—*flammantia mœnia mundi*. But, above all, as his letters indicate, he was anxious for a field in which to give expression to his own peculiar experiences, which he thought might help other men ; and to turn his energies to direct practical advantage. He would embark at least, he thought, on the preliminary courses to that profession ; and then, at worst, it would not be too late to turn back, if, after a few years' study and further soundings, he found that his conscience or his taste recoiled from the final step. It was therefore with no little pleasure that, to lay his father's anxieties to rest, he wrote, about this time, the following letter, well knowing with what satisfaction it would be received :—

LETTER XXXVIII. (*To his Father.*)—"T—, September, 1862.—My dear Father,—You really have very good reason to be angry with me for having omitted for so long a time to write to you; but I must plead in extenuation, if not in excuse, of my fault the fact that my time is nowadays fully occupied, between studying for my examination, reading for my own improvement, writing poetry, grinding my pupils, sitting down to solemn luncheons and state dinners, and taking my scanty two hours' exercise. Besides all this, life [here] is of such an exceedingly humdrum character that I really find it a task of my wits to write anything of interest to anybody; and my correspondence with G\*\*\*\*\* touches on little or nothing except two points which we have at heart in common . . . . and which perhaps I may be pardoned for coupling together,—the Christian Religion and the Art of Poetry.

"With regard to the former, my dear Father, I am sure it will be welcome news to you to hear that the dark cloud of scepticism which has passed over [my] youth has been completely dispelled. . . . Miserable, ineffably miserable, as was my passage through that dark valley of the shadow of death, without a single star to guide me, all my hopes and all my yearnings after purity and righteousness overwhelmed and swallowed up in a terrible denial of God and of all the loveliness of the sublime system

which is based upon the recognition of His existence, —I yet believe that this fiery ordeal has been wisely ordained for a great purpose, and that no fitter training for the profession which . . . I have determined to adopt could have been possibly chosen in these days of doubt and unbelief. . . .

“With regard to the latter subject . . . I shall look no more upon poetry as a dilettante relaxation, but as one of the great duties of my life, as a means of rendering use to others rather than of acquiring fame for myself, as . . . a gift which I dare not abuse by turning it to my own glory or by pandering with it to the pleasures of men. . . . Your affectionate son, E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

“I am gaining,” he wrote to his mother, on the same theme, “what is far more profitable than honours and moderatorships,—namely, an inkling of the human race, and a good store of health and spirits to boot. . . . I won’t be one of your milk-and-water parsons who preach dry morality and don’t know their fellowmen and their thoughts. I am gaining gradually a magnificent experience, and I have confident hopes of being able to wield the golden keys of the great human heart with success.” And the same sentiments again find expression in the course of his next letter to Mr. C\*\*\*\*\*:—

LETTER XXXIX. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*T* —, *September* 12, 1862.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—On six different occasions during the past six weeks I have

endeavoured to carry out the converse of my resolution, not to write to you without at the same time benefiting either you or myself; and on all these occasions I have signally failed. But, as it is not right that we, having seen so much of each other's hearts and minds, should remain isolated like Coleridge's famous cliffs,<sup>1</sup> I venture to reopen our correspondence, which I must ask your forgiveness for having so abruptly and arbitrarily broken off.

"Our sentiments with regard to the religion of Christ are probably nearly similar now; but, as you have enjoyed a longer experience of the happiness of faith than I have, I wish you would write to me about it. I correspond freely on this subject with my brother, who is in the same stage as I myself—which you are not,—the very reason why I should wish for a word from you on the matter. . . .

"The subject which occupies in my mind the next place to religion is poetry, which I am steadily endeavouring to convert into an instrument for the consolation of others, by imparting to them a measure of the bliss which I have derived from even a superficial glimpse of the truth of God. I place a high value on your criticisms, although I dissent from them in many points, as your taste in poetry is not quite the same as mine. I should

<sup>1</sup> "They stood aloof, the scars remaining,  
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder."

(*Christabel*.)—ED.

therefore be obliged to you, if you would tell me what appear to you to be the principal faults in my last two poems, and whether you sympathize with me in my plan of labouring for the benefit of our miserable country. Never mind saying anything about their innumerable and unparalleled beauties; but confine your criticisms to their blemishes; as it is more than probable that I see a great many more of the former than you will ever see, and that I shall never see so many of the latter as you do even now. Excuse straw-paper (which is not meant satirically), and believe me to be, ever yours, EDMUND ARMSTRONG."

But now, for awhile, the great pleasure which he had been deriving from the free exercise of fancy in poetry was interrupted by the autumnal chills; and he could no longer restrain the expression of his longings to be back again among scenes which bright associations had made trebly dear; and he felt that the consolation to be drawn from the religion to which he desired to cling, was as yet but faint indeed.

LETTER XL. (*To G. F. A.*) — "T——, *September 11, 1862.* . . . I am far from well. There is a keen hoar-frost every night, which I feel in my cold bedroom, notwithstanding the turf-fire which Mrs. \*\*\*\*, with semi-maternal solicitude, insists on having lighted in my fireplace every evening. Then, there is a dense fog, when the frost takes

the air, every morning, which gives me a pain in my chest when I go out for half-an-hour's exercise, and a cold in the head when I stay in the house to avoid its baleful influence. Added to which, I am as nervous as a kitten in influenza, and as dyspeptic as the old broken-knee'd horse that is retained as an incurable pensioner in the pigs' field yonder."

The following passages will explain themselves as far as it is at present necessary that they should be explained :—

LETTER XLI. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T ———, Sunday, September 12, 1862.—Mon cher frère,—... I do n't believe I shall be able to stand the winter in this country. If I could go to Jersey for three or four months . . . , it would perhaps save me from the hell in my bosom. In a different parish of that island from that in which . . . resides, there is a fair spiritual face, which does haunt me in my despair, and which I do believe could rescue me from the deep damnation by one smile. . . Can you imagine the frantic tenacity with which I cling to this one idea? That face first appeared to me when my heart was seared and scorched by one of the most scathing disappointments that could ever befall a passionate soul. I cannot tell you of it now, but I may, perhaps, at some future time, when the wound is perfectly healed. But that face, those eyes first gave me comfort. I used to delight



in watching them Sunday after Sunday ; but how could I love them then, I, who believed that such a thing as love was no longer possible for me ? I who looked on men and women with a jaundiced eye ; who regarded them as the beasts which perish ; who, having been blighted and blasted once, believed that there was no such thing as faith or love or hope in this universe ? I see my error now ; but how *could* I see it then ? My spirit cannot now exist without love ; and I feel that, if ever I am to raise myself up from the dust by a pure and noble affection, there is but one spirit whom I can love—the spirit which, mysteriously, I know not how, gave me solace in that hour of withering desolation, the spirit which has shone on mine day by day ever since for nearly two entire years, the spirit which visits me now in troubled sleep, which leads me mysteriously to the fountain of consolation, which inspires me with my noblest thoughts in poetry, and which whispers to my soul—‘ With me thou mayest become noble and great and good ; with me thou mayest be able to realize permanently the transcendent love of Him who died for thee ; but without me thou wilt wither and dwindle and droop. Thou canst not love Christ, if thou canst not first know what human love is ! ’ . . .

“ Try and realize the mad energy with which I clutch at this one hope, so beautiful, so bewildering. . . . You might have observed often enough

the struggle it cost me to throw off the only good influence I know, and to take into my soul the seven devils of mockery and disbelief. Ah ! me, such a soul as mine was never made for such devils as these to pollute ! Give me your sympathy now, unless you want to see me possessed by a whole legion of evil spirits. Give me your sympathy and your aid, if you want to see me a man. I have long felt something so nearly akin to the old love (which I can hardly bear to think of) springing up within me, and promising me deliverance from myself, that I cannot crush it any longer. . . . If I destroy it, my soul will perish along with it.—Your affectionate brother, EDMUND ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER XLII. (*To G. F. A.*)—“ *T*——, *Wednesday, September 17, 1862* . . . Your letter has done me unspeakable service. I was going clean mad before I got it. I did n’t sleep a wink all last night. . . .

“ . . . . Has it become an indispensable part of my existence ? . . . Every moment it becomes more so. Every moment it warps itself more and more intricately, more and more indissolubly, with every fibre of my being. Would it be beneficial if realized ? My whole soul cries out that it would. It would save me from myself. . . . It would give me a great purpose to live for ; it would enable me to conquer with a strong right hand all the evils that beset my soul, to trample down for ever the demons that haunt my spirit and threaten to take possession of

it and enslave it. If it be not realized, if I go on thus in agony of incertitude, I shall die—my soul will perish, if not my body. If it be not realized, after I have made a fair trial of its practicability, I shall become a sort of intensified Petrarch. The passion will haunt me to my death-bed. To tear it from my heart would be impossible. No: I shall not have enough of nobility left in me even to produce a poor voluptuous Petrarch. I shall resemble more closely the poisoned rat in Goethe's terrible lyric. . . .

“Tear it from my heart! How can I? Every face, every character, that I have learnt appears a bauble in comparison with that face, with the character which it must and does conceal. If I were loved by a woman more lovely than Aphrodite, more intellectual than Hypatia, more innocent than Desdemona, more accomplished than L. E. L., I feel that I could not return the passion. That face, those eyes, would come between me and her every moment, and all her perfections would vanish like a shadow. . .

“It is not a mere poetic dream. It is a great poetic reality. . .

“But I shall not immolate duty on the idolatrous altar of self. I will pray, I have prayed, for guidance, and I believe my prayer will be answered. . . Once for all, I declare that I will not go back to Jersey unless my health absolutely requires it, and

I shall do my best to prevent my health from requiring it. . . .

“ Finally, let it end how it will, I never shall love any other. I have struggled long against it, because it has at times appeared to me impracticable, melodramatic, Platonic. But my struggles have only made it recoil with tenfold vigour on my soul. . . . She very probably never bestowed a thought on me. . . . But for nearly two years I have struggled with my passion, and it has now completely mastered me. Tell me, like a practical man of the lowest order of common-sense, that this is calf-love, that the sooner I get rid of it the better. I will answer you, that you do not know me. . . . I know myself thoroughly by this time ; and I know that, if I am never in all my life to look upon her again, that passion will never leave me. As the spirit of Francesca clung to the spirit of her lover in the eddying blasts of the realm of darkness, that spirit will cling to mine in the tumults, the tempests, the billows, the tenfold gloom of life ; bending over me, and bidding me to hope, when I lie writhing in the last agonies of the couch of death ; winging its way with me to the throne of God, or descending with me to the fires of perdition and empowering me to fling defiance at the tortures of the damned . . .

“ O God, have mercy on me ! My thoughts are terrible. Has Satan come to tempt me with the symbol of Thy greatest perfection ? . . . ”

LETTER XLIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, *Friday, September 19, 1862.*—What will come of it? Is it but a poet's dream? Is the fair star of morning whose radiance thrills me with an indescribable delirium of hope and joy, while I drink in the refulgence of its beams amid the cold, blank, white heaven—is it the forerunner of a bright and glorious day, or does the Serpent beguile me in his loveliest form, the guise of the fallen Angel of Light? Is the beautiful form—the spiritual eye, the brow encircled with the wreath of magic light—a phantom or a reality? The wild romance of Lamia is an intensely vivid vision to me. A strain of sorrowful music has ere now crept through me like a mighty spirit, stirring the roots of my hair and causing me to shudder in the delicious agony to my very feet. Is this sweet sad enchantment of love like that mournful song? Will it pass away and leave me as before, cold as marble, gloomy as the sepulchre?—Or will it not rather grow more and more entrancing, richer, lovelier, nobler,—a deep, divine harmony welling out from my own solitary soul, gushing forth from unknown depths of feeling and fountains of frozen tears, and rolling onward and onward, broader, deeper, nobler still, till the low sweet chaunt of human love shall become a portion of that magnificent burst of praise and joy which swells around the throne of the Lamb for ever? . . . . .

"I have seen her pray. I have heard her sing.

It was as though an angel held communion with God. The witching melody still lingers in my soul. It comes to me in trouble, in sorrow, in perplexity; from the bright pellucid deeps of memory it comes; and, charmed by the wondrous spell, I feel as though I could shake myself free from the coils of temptations and miseries which bind me, and break them in sunder as Samson the cords of the Philistine. It comes to me in my weary dismal dreams, and the gates of Heaven fly open at its touch.

\* \* \* \* \*

*“ Saturday.*

“What if my ideal Eden were to prove but a fool’s paradise after all? What if it were? . . . Why should I wish to suffer like Dante or Tasso, I, who have already suffered so much before, I, who have drained the bitter cup of disappointment already to the very lees? . . . .

“.. I will stick rigidly to what seems to me to be my duty. Whether I turn out a fiend or a saint depends on the result of the fierce battle now raging between the angels and the devils for my soul. I cry to the strong Human Sufferer who sitteth at the right hand of God, to turn the uncertain tide of the conflict; but I am as yet unable to realize any comfort. I pray to an idea and not a reality. That which seemed to me a few weeks ago the only

reality in the whole universe, has changed to me as the phantom of Fionnuala's love.<sup>1</sup>

"This day I shall do no mathematics. I shall devote every moment of my time to a close study of the Gospel of St. John. . . .

"Well, well : others have suffered more terribly than I, many of them without even that shadow of a Faith which imparts a vague consolation to me.

". . . If I were never to see her again, never, never to see her again, I shall not do what is wrong. I have given up all intention of going to Jersey. . .

"All my hopes of winning her are vain. . .

"Henceforth I worship Fame. Yet it will be many, many long wearisome years before I gather one fading laurel. The passion will grow instead of decaying. But where will she be then? . . . —  
Your affectionate brother, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Midnight.*

"Thank God ! thank God ! the fitful fever is past. And Christ Himself has healed what the most skilful physician, the wisest moralist, the deepest philosopher would have failed to better.

' There came to the Pool of Bethesda a certain man which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been a long time in that case, he saith unto him, wilt thou be made whole ? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled,

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to his own "Glandalough."—ED.

to put me into the pool ; but, while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. . . . Then asked they him, What man hath said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was ; for Jesus had conveyed himself away. . . . Afterwards Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.'

"Do you not see it all? Was not mine a worse spiritual infirmity than that bodily one of eight-and-thirty years? Did I not look wistfully and earnestly for some human spirit to help me from the disease and sin of unbelief? Did I not cry in agony of spirit, 'Lord, I have no human love, when the living water is troubled, to lead me unto Thee?' Did I not look for the needed assistance to a dream, a myth, a shadow, the shadow of a shadow? And did not He hear my secret cry, and answer within my soul, 'Rise, and walk—suffer not the brilliant colours of thy vision to dazzle thee so that thou mayest not discern the right from the wrong?' And I, when I felt the new strength gathering in my soul, I wist not who it was. I thought, forsooth, that it was my own strong will triumphing over the storm of passion that raged and roared within! Then I took the book of God, and worshipped weakly, and in fear and trembling; and He found me in the silent temple of prayer, prostrate before the Father in misery and remorse, and He said unto me in a voice like the sound of many waters 'Behold, thou art



made whole ; sin no more, lest a worse evil come unto thee.'

" . . . Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief ! Thou wilt aid me to burn away that secret joy which must end in madness, if indulged ! And Thou wilt look upon me more in sorrow than in anger if I fail, if it be my doom to love her still ! . . . "

From a deadly struggle between inclination and an exalted sense of duty, between a counterfeit faith and that confidence in the potency of Christ's example which he had striven so hard to recover, he emerged stronger than ever ; but not to become oblivious of that beautiful dream. He remained steadily at his post, even refusing pressing invitations from old friends and schoolfellows, which, without much difficulty, he might have accepted. "M\*\*\*\*\*" he wrote, "has asked me repeatedly and warmly to pay him a visit ; but I cannot go till next year, as I should not think it right to \*\*\*\* to leave them so often." But he sought relief for feelings painfully overwrought, and found it, in poetry ; and was soon active, as his next letter to Mr. C\*\*\*\*\* indicates, receiving criticisms and planning new experiments. At the opening of the letter he refers to strictures on the poem of *Glandalough* :—

LETTER XLIV. (*To G. A. C.*) — " T——, *September 24, 1862.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I purloined the 'crawling' foam from an exquisite little poem of Kingsley's in *Alton Locke* ; but, since it

does n't please you, and since it has come between me and my sleep ever since I committed the theft, I restore the property to its rightful owner. Henceforth I will resolutely dismiss *wild*, *mad*, and *ghastly*, with the rest of my pet words, with a sturdy *Abrenuntio Sathanas* ! I adopt your amendment of the 'mothers *madly* praying,' with many thanks for the trouble you have taken in recasting the imperfect model. I will also soften down Sir Valence's ugly and unnatural proposal to play the traitor. If I represent him as trying to convince Eileen of the security of her brothers, so far as her lover is concerned, I think it will be natural enough. I know that were I in Sir Valence's enviable position, it is just what the Devil would suggest to me to do. But he would certainly supply me with more poetic rhetoric to clothe the treacherous proposal withal. I meant the storm to be over, and the night and next day too, when I brought the stout-lunged lady once more to sing beside the crag ; thus giving Sir Valence ample time to go where he liked in the meantime. But as the lines are as obscure as Tartarus, &c., let them stand thus :—

But when the night and day had passed in storm,  
And now the winds were hushed, and Glandalough  
Glowed like a dream beneath the westering sun, &c.

"I shall cut out the old song (perhaps), and invent a new one. Look you, friend, if you write long

songs, there is no chance of their being howled and 'screeched' and made faces over by marriageable young damsels, to the consternation and disgust of the swallow-tailed martyrs who do the agreeable by turning over the leaves of the music. That is one decided advantage in favour of long-winded songs. But ah ! let me, *do* let me have my hero a villain ! My sense of poetic justice revolts at the idea of canonizing the young gentleman. No, he must be a 'demon lover,' like the phantom in the legend of Miss Fionnuala, or the whole beauty of the introduction of, and the perpetual recurrence to, that tragical story will be irrevocably lost. Not such a wholesale, grand, tremendous, Miltonic villain as Lancelot ; but a nice, polite, dashing young rascal ; only slightly bashful when confronted for the first time in his life with true innocence and unsullied loveliness—in fact, let him be one of the Charley Wings or Bob Twigs of society actually undergoing the process of first-love.

"The address to our warm-hearted, be-devilled, be-buffooned (allow the expression, as I am writing in *dishabille*) countrymen is badly lugged in, but I must be allowed time for consideration ere I demolish it—

' Sed me  
Imperiosa trahit Proserpina ; vive valeque.'—

"Yours sincerely, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.

"P.S.—I have missed the proper time for putting my letter into the post-bag, so you are doomed to read some pages more of my caligraphy.

"I quite agree with your remarks on the *Ars Poetica*, its present degeneracy, and its probable resuscitation. The style of Tennyson is at present producing a horde of barbaric imitators, or rather caricaturists, just as the style of Pope did until the school of Thomson and Cowper arose and put them to an ignominious flight. . . . I know very little of the poets of the day, and perhaps so much the better for myself. I have never read the works of Browning, Arnold (Matthew or Edwin), Patmore, Trench, nor even Frederick Tennyson. By-the-by, are you aware that the latter (F. Tennyson) has published a volume called *Days and Hours*! . .

"The next poem I write will be in the *terza rima*. . . I have got a magnificent plot in my head. *Dì fausti sint!* . . .

"And now, my dear friend, perhaps the less I say about religion the better. I thank you sincerely for what you have written to me about it. . . . As I read again and again the story of Him who wept over Lazarus, His dead friend, 'so that even the mourners wondered at His love,' I am struck dumb with awe and gratitude, I am struck blind with the beauty and magnificence which dawn upon my spirit's eyes. To believe that He loves you and even me as He loved Lazarus, as He loved the

disciples whose feet He washed, is the very perfection of all our dreams of happiness. May we love Him more and more every day, for our gratitude should know no bounds ! . . .—Your sincere friend,  
EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

Towards the close of this month he was prevailed upon to go on a visit to the house of some very old friends of his family, not far from the shores of Lough Erne, the scenery of which he was anxious to see. He thus visited—strange enough, for the first time in his life—his own ancestral county ; and just at the moment when his mind was drawn to the consideration of family vicissitudes, he received a letter announcing the death of the head of his house. His reply is a fit tribute to the memory of a man of spotless honour, of upright exemplary life, of the gentlest and kindest of hearts. Colonel Armstrong<sup>1</sup> had been in constant correspondence with his nephew, had watched his career with parental interest, had been unweariable in his kindness to him for years. The one wish which he never favoured was his early one to become a soldier ;

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Alexander Boswell Armstrong, entering the army as an ensign in the 21st R. S. Fusiliers, fought with that regiment in the American War in 1814, and was taken prisoner at New Orleans. Later in life, he passed over to the Cape of Good Hope, where he commanded the Cape Mounted Rifles in engagements with the Kafirs and Boers, and where the military post of Fort Armstrong still preserves his name ; a name remembered in the military history of Cape

part, as he had promised in his letter of the 24<sup>th</sup> September, in a stanza modelled upon Shelley's imitations of the *terza rima*, was as curious a medley of tragic and comic elements as could be desired. He was working out a theory, long growing in his mind, based, as has been indicated above, on his quick perception of the violent contrasts which nature perpetually presents in juxtaposition—contrasts of the kind which struck him with such peculiar force in the spring of the year at Caen, and, indeed, frequently during his French journey; a theory which his intense enjoyment of absurdities predisposed him to adopt. The *terza rima*, hallowed by its association with the gravest poem of all time, lent itself, curiously enough, to the expression of varying moods, and formed as apt a vehicle for sudden but natural transitions from the sublime to the ridiculous as the stanza of *Beppo* or *Don Juan*; and, indeed, it was impossible, as has been said, for the writer not to drift into a system and a style which laid him open to a charge of imitating Byron, although the resemblance was purely superficial after all.

In October he went up to Dublin, passed his Michaelmas Term Examination, and made himself thus once more a student of Trinity College; and, after a few joyous "literary saturnalia," and a few joyous walks, returned to his seclusion, and fell to work again.

An unusually early and severe frost, in November, instead of acting injuriously upon his health, braced him and invigorated him ; and, in addition, afforded him some lively days of skating. But this nearly cost him dear ; for, with his usual impetuous enjoyment of activity, which rendered him unconscious of risk when his blood was up, he returned one evening to the ice after dark, with results which this letter will describe :—

LETTER XLVI. (*To \*\*\*\*\*.*)—"T——, November 26, 1862. . . . Behold me in my bedroom, before a turf-fire, robed in a dirty dressing-gown which is not my own, my right eye closed up and outvying the rainbow in its prismatic hues, a deep gash over my right brow, and the whole side of my face black, blue, and swollen. I was skating all day yesterday, and some demon tempted me to venture again on the ice, tired and stiff as I was, after nightfall, when lo ! a crack in the ice tripped me, and I fell with a fearful crash on my face. A flash crossed my eyes, so vivid that I fancied I could have lit my pipe from it. I thought my jaw was broken, till this morning, when toast and tea dispelled the horrible illusion. Such excruciating torture as I experienced last night I hope none of my friends will ever suffer.

"Perhaps I may meet you in Belfast in January. When do you go, and how long do you stay, and at what hotel will you stop? I am glad you are on

in every point but the *ne plus ultra* of sensitiveness—or call it subjectivity—far outshine them. We never see *Iliads* or *Paradise(s) Lost(s)* or *Jerusalems Delivered* or *Infernos* nowadays—why? Because poets have got a false ideal of poetry, and imagine the highest art to consist in vague yearnings after the indefinable, expressed in verse nearly as musical as Italian. Babies crying for the moon in mewling concerto! I verily believe, that, setting aside the drama and the lyric, England has produced but *one* great poet, Milton. Pope and Dryden are very happy in their way; but who would place Juvenal and Persius in the same niche with Homer and Virgil? Thomson is a landscape-painter *à la* . . . . Cowper's claims to the laurel may be estimated by the fact that he is only read by orthodox fools and their superstitious grandmamas. Scott's poems are novelets in halting rhyme, interesting only from the plot and the costume. Byron is a demigod, but he sings but one song, his own death-wail; and woe to him who falls into the Circean snare! Southey tried to emulate the ancient epic, but his subjects are too far-fetched and his sympathies are straightlaced. Wordsworth is a philosopher, who chose verse for his medium—God only knows why! Coleridge has shown us what he could have done, and has done nothing. Tennyson has n't energy to do anything except in fragments. . . . A goodly treatise might be written to show the



thread which connects the magnificent obscurities of *In Memoriam*. *The Princess* is an incongruous mass of melodious puerilities. *Maud* is essentially lyrical in spirit as in construction ; the character of the hero alone is delineated, and that only partially, the outlines being blurred, and at times swept away, by the storm of his passion. The *Idylls* are very beautiful, and, indeed, the most dramatic of the Laureate's works ; but are they not, at best, inferior to many novels of the day ? How many scores of Lancelots, Elaines, Geraints, and Guineveres are there not to be found, more clearly and fully drawn, on the shelves of the cheapest circulating libraries ?

“ You will, of course, say that I am running into an extreme. I could wish to see *one* great poem, modelled upon Homer, Virgil, Dante, Tasso, and Milton, and combining the highest qualities of each. The subject should be near our own times. The dramatic portions should comprehend somewhat of the wit and deep wisdom of Shakespeare, the terrible fatalism of Æschylus, the massive grandeur of Sophocles, the impassioned despair of Euripides. They should have somewhat of the scorn and the intensity of Goethe, united with the vivid passion of Schiller. In the expression of individual feeling alone should the lyrical poets be called in aid. It is the greatest mistake to place the man who describes the feelings of the individual [self] higher.

than him who grapples with all phases of nature and humanity, and groups them together on imperishable canvas.

"I'm in a great hurry, and this paper is disgusting, or I should write more and with greater care. But I think I have said enough to show how little I can admire such sketches as my *Stories of Wicklow* and your ——, with such an ideal perpetually enlarging itself before my mind. You asked me to slash, so it's your own fault if I have hit too hard; but I don't spare myself. . . . .

*"After a Bæotian lunch.*

"My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I have given you a conceit of mine about 'the golden doors of honour,' and, on the strength of this sublime piece of generosity, I have ventured to appropriate a 'bon-mot' of yours, being myself 'the poorer of the two.'

"The lines are to come in after the description of [my heroine's] sorrow, as follows:—

Critic! thy face with righteous anger glows;  
I see professional disdain upon its  
Expressive lines: yet every reader knows

That Petrarch was specific in his sonnets;  
Most women are elaborate in their woes—  
They learn the art, perhaps, from trimming bonnets.

"How like you the *ragoût* in my style of cooking? If there be a hint implied in it that Petrarch was no better than an old woman, I'm not disposed to alter it, having seen his portrait, read his life, and

perused, with disgust at their effeminacy, the translations of many of his best sonnets.

"I am revising the three *Stories of Wicklow* already written, and I have projected a fourth, which I shall commence immediately.

"Forgive this intense egotism, and believe me to remain, ever yours sincerely,—E. J. ARMSTRONG."

The next letter qualifies the criticisms of the foregoing, and concludes the correspondence of the year :—

LETTER XLVIII. (*To G. A. C.*)—" *Bæotia, Christmas Day, 1862.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—. . ' *A first-rate novel is a first-rate poem, and the only first-rate poem now possible.*' I don't agree with you, because I believe that the novel, at best, is only an approach to poetry, which requires, as its characteristic essential, to be expressed in rhythm and numbers. It seems to be a universal law of nature which ranks the verse-writer higher than the prose-writer in the estimation of peoples. The age which produced Boccaccio produced also Dante and Petrarch ; yet the author of the *Hundred Tales* was never crowned with laurel on the Capitol. The greatest modern novelist and the greatest modern poet were contemporaries ; yet Scott, in his palmyest days, never attained the applause which was lavished on his rival. This is certainly a very important question, and I hope you will not suffer it to drop here. . . . In the meanwhile, however, I

would propose an amendment of your dictum. A first-rate novel is the nearest approach which we find in these days to the ancient ideal of the Epic; and the man who can write a first-rate modern novel, could compose, if he were a perfect master of the art of versification, the greatest poem ever yet produced. What sort of a novel would Tennyson write, I should like to know. Yet if Wilkie Collins and Thackeray possessed the Laureate's accomplishment of verse, there can be little doubt that they would write far better poems than he ever wrote.

"It is a significant fact, that our poets, notwithstanding their mediocrity, are esteemed higher than our best novelists by every one except commercial old gentlemen and young ladies of the fashionable watering-places. . . .—Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG."

CHAPTER XV. 1863, ÆT. 21—.

Letter XLIX. : *The Relations of Tragedy and Comedy*.—A Dramatic Poem Abandoned.—A Midnight Arrival at Home.—Wicklow Walks.—Levee-Day at Dublin Castle; Suggestions.—Letter L. : “*De Profundis*.”—Letter LI. : *The “Odyssey.”*—Letters LII., LIII. : “*The Divinity of Work*.”—Religion of Selfishness denounced.—“Penitential Trilogue.”—Utmost Limit of Religious Belief.—Letter LIV. : *A Dream ; Eternity of Bliss*.—Letter LV. : *Hope ; Recollections of Jersey*.—Letter LVI. : “*The Opera : A Lyric*.”—Letter LVII. : A Frank Avowal.—The Philosophical Society of Dublin University : Essay on Shelley.—“*Poetry versus The Novel*.”—Letter LVIII. : *Rules for Artists ; “Dublin Castle : A Satirical Novel.”*—Celebration of the Prince of Wales’s Marriage.—Letters LIX., LX., LXI. : *Reminiscences of France*.—Letter LXII. : *Feeling towards Old Correspondent*.—Letter LXIII. : *An Invitation*.—Essay on Shelley at T. C. D.—A Day in the Devil’s Glen.—“*Mary of Clorah*.”—Letter LXIV. : *Mind and Body*.—Letter LXV. : *Contrasts ; Duty ; Solitude*.—Letter LXVI. : *Plot for a “Sensation Novel ;” Alarming Disappearance*.—Letter LXVII. : *A Generous Offer accepted ; “Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael” commenced*.—Writing the “*Prisoner* ;” Absorption in the Work.—Letters LXVIII., LXIX., LXX., LXXI., LXXII., LXXIII. : “*The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael*.”—Letter LXXIV. : *Exhortations*.—Home again.—“*The Prisoner, &c.*” read.

**A**N equally important subject of consideration with him at this time, was that of the relations of tragedy and comedy.

It had been suggested to him to separate the serious and comic portions of the long poem above alluded to, which he had written in November, principally on the grounds of their incongruity; but, in endeavouring to establish the validity of this objection, its advocate had pushed his theory too far, extending it even to the drama. In a dramatic poem which Armstrong had commenced towards the close of December, and had gone on writing with rapidity—and which I shall indicate, for convenience, by the name of its hero, “*Everard*”—he had been steadily working out the obnoxious principle. The suggestion was, therefore, not very welcome at such a moment, and he replied to it as follows :—

LETTER XLIX. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T*—, *January 5, 1863.* . . . I am dead against altering a single incident of the plot of ‘*Everard*,’ though I shall spare no pains to render it plainer. . .

“The highest praise ever bestowed upon Shakespeare is, that he has bequeathed both ‘tears and *laughter* to all time.’ This constitutes the great difference between him and [our] subsequent poets. Shelley has said that ‘*King Lear* is the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world.’ . . . Yet what would *King Lear* be without its Nuncle and its poor Tom? *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* are stately and classical tragedies, yet they [are not without] comedy. . . . Even

*Othello* has its drunken Lieutenant, and *Macbeth* its drunken Porter.

“Let us go back farther, and we find that even the severe and iron-hearted Æschylus condescends to comedy, when he represents the confusion and indecision of the chorus of aged Trojans at the most thrilling moment of his most appalling tragedy, the moment of the murder of Agamemnon by his wife. Homer likewise has his Thersites, his old councillors on the tower with voices like tree-grasshoppers, his limping Vulcan acting as cup-bearer in Olympus, his effeminate Paris, rescued from the field of battle in a cloud prepared by Venus, and placed by the side of the lamenting Helen. The *Odyssey* and the *Hymn to Mercury* are both redundant with excruciating comedy. What were *Hamlet* without Polonius and the Clowns? What were *Faust* without its promenade, its drinking-company, its monkeys and witches, its exquisitely-contrasted by-play of Mephistopheles and Martha? What were *The Robbers* without the scene in the drinking-cellar, and the ludicrous revelations there unfolded? Lastly, look over Chaucer, and you will discover a paramount proof of the truth of my theory. Milton was a purely intellectual man. He had no comedy in his soul. Yet even *he* awkwardly attempts it in his account of the introduction of gunpowder,<sup>1</sup> and undoubtedly for this reason only, that he of all poets

<sup>1</sup> “Par. Lost,” Bk. VI.—ED.

since the revival of letters followed the ancient model most closely.

“These instances, ancient and modern, are sufficient to decide me never to write a tragedy without its due admixture of comedy. I am most willing to admit that I have failed in [the narrative poem of November], but I shall not strive to remedy a few flaws in a statue by sawing the marble block asunder and making two of it.

What is the poet's highest function? No doubt to instruct his fellow-men. But the most effectual manner in which he may carry out this sublime purpose is by ‘holding the mirror up to nature.’ Now, that man's eyes must be affected by the pervading bile of his constitution who can look on nature and deny that it is a picture evenly chequered by the lights of comedy and the shades of tragedy. Even the Heraclituses, the Timons, the Byrons recognize this fact most palpably and keenly. I conclude, therefore, that no poem is a perfect whole unless it contain both these constituting elements of human life.

“Your father is dead, your mistress is irrevocably alienated, your finances are engulfed in ruin. In a state of frenzy you walk out into the public highway. The first object that meets your gaze is an inflated calf in love, a coquetting damsel making a fool of him, an old dandy in as painful a suit of fashionable clothes as Malvolio's cross-garters, an antiquated



virgin in ravishing little boots and a soul-annihilating bonnet. Is this an overdrawn sketch of life? If not, let it be always borne in mind that the skilful introduction of the comic element invariably heightens, instead of marring, the effect of the tragic. As in life, so in art. You may idealize as much as you please, but even the Apollo Belvedere and the Florentine Venus are modelled upon the 'ripe and real,' and the centaurs of mythology and Horace's *mulier formosa superne*, &c., are but combinations of the realities of nature. —EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

With that generous, modest, large-hearted sympathy with other men's opinions, even when most directly opposed to his own, which he exhibited all his life through, he received the rejoinder to this letter. The result of the controversy was a modification of the theories of both disputants, and a perfect concurrence of opinion between them. Armstrong, arresting his hand in the full career of invention, reread his drama, and then wrote these sentences after its last line :—" I pause here to consider what I have written. After deliberately considering the relations in which tragedy and comedy stand to one another, I have resolved to recast the comic or humourous portions of this drama, and to reproduce them in prose. In this I follow the example of Shakespeare. I must also endeavour to paint strong characters henceforward, and, as a general rule, abstain from my tendencies to indulge

in comedy on the most solemn occasions. Let the humourist laugh in prose, which is his native element ; but I must take a higher stand.—*January 8, 1863.*” And the same day he wrote to his correspondent :—“ My dear old fellow,—I so thoroughly acquiesce in your really eloquent and enlightened criticism that I have resolved not to write another line of my abortive drama ; at least, until I have read to you what I have already composed, and taken your opinion of the advisability of continuing it.”

An opportunity for this merry reading was soon obtained, as his Diary commemorates :—“ *Jan. 17.* Took a sudden whim and came home to Kingstown by the ——— P.M. train. Arrived at ——— P.M. All in bed. Talked with G\*\*\*\*\* till about 2½ in the morning.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> . . . These sudden whims and unexpected midnight arrivals were sometimes attended with amusing results. One night in the preceding autumn he had arrived very late at the door of his father’s house, and found all dark and silent. He knocked and rang, but no response came. He knocked and rang again and again ; and at last the voice of a domestic was heard in alarm from within, demanding, “ Who’s there ? ” The timidity which the question and the tone of the voice betrayed aroused his inward mirth, and he determined to enjoy the joke. So he assumed the brogue and manners of a drunken country-fellow, and demanded admission vociferously—“ Let me in, or I ’ll pull down the house ; by all that’s sacred in heaven and earth, I ’ll smash the windows, I ’ll wring off the knocker, I ’ll tear out the bell-wire ! ”—“ Go away, go away,”

When he had read aloud his drama "*Everard*," and discussed it, he announced his resolution to

cried the voice. "Go away, is it? I'm blowed if I'll go away," said he, knocking more furiously than ever. Disturbed by the noise, his father now descended the stairs in the condition of Signor Brabantio when he appears at the summons of Iago and Roderigo. "Who *are* you?" inquired the well-known voice.—"I'm a poor counthry-fellow; and I want a night's lodgin'. I have n't a halfpenny to buy a bit of bread with, and I have n't a stitch of clothes on my back, and I've buried all that's belongin' to me."—"Well, there's nothing for you here, my man; so you had better go about your business."—"O Charity, Charity, Christian Charity!" cried Armstrong from without, ready to burst with laughter—"What's a poor divvil of a benighted thraveller to do at all-at-all?"—"Get away, sir, at once, or I'll call the Police!"—"The Pòliss, avourneen! ah, musha, musha, there's a nice kind gintleman! . . . But look-at-here, yer Honour! I've got two fine birds for yer Honour's Lardship—a cock and a hin—take *thim* anyhow; I'll return good for evil, so I will; I'll bear no malice, wid the help of God—so take the cock and the hin!"—"Who *are* you, and what is your business?"—"My business is pig-dhrivin', and I want a night's lodgin'."—"Then once for all, I tell you to go away."—"Oh, thin, it'll be the worse for you if you dhrive poor Tom from yer door; these is dangerous times" (*roaring like thunder through the keyhole*)—"these is dangerous times, begarra!" The whole household was now aroused and up. . . "Oh, get away, sir, I tell you," persisted the major-domo, kindling with rage.—"Thin, just open the door a bit, and take the cock and the hin, and I'll go, and joy be wid yiz."—"Papa, papa," cried a gentle voice from above, "it's Edmund; do n't you know it *must* be Edmund; who else *could* it be?"—"Let me in, or by the holy Jingo I'll smash down the door," shouted Armstrong, in unutterable amusement; and

abandon it altogether. Some of its passages were recast, and appear as separate pieces among his miscellaneous poems.

During his brief visit now to Kingstown, he passed an examination in College, took many walks, wrote several lyrics, met many friends, and enjoyed many conversations on congenial themes.

“*January*, 18.—Walked with G\*\*\*\*\* round Little Sugar Loaf into Bray—Newton-Vevay, Graystones, Kilmacanogue. Very happy.—*Jan.* 19.—Walked about. Read some poetry, and talked a good deal. *Jan.* 20.—Blissful conversation. . . *Æsthetic smoke*.—*Jan.* 22.—We walked. Delightful weather—soft, genial, warm.”

On the 28th, being Levee-Day at Dublin Castle—an establishment which always moved his mirth—he strolled into Upper Castle Yard, to enjoy its absurdities; and, out of the reflections to which the scene there that day gave rise, developed the idea of a satirical novel (the scheme of which some of his later letters sketch), which he wished to be the joint work of several friends, but which was not taken up warmly by more than one.

The next morning he returned to the North; and so pleased had he been with his fortnight among old friends and old scenes, that he was attacked the

with that the door was opened, and in he tumbled, with a brace of grouse in one hand, and his valise in the other, amid a volley of laughter that might have awakened the dead.—ED.

day following by a very rare disease with him, and one to which he never so succumbed before or after—a fit of downright unconquerable home-sickness. It was but a momentary defeat of his strong will, a day's intense depression, which he speedily threw off in gallant activity. But it assumed serious importance in the eyes of a certain profoundly stupid critic of Mr. Chadwick's affectionate Memoir, prefixed to the First Edition of his Poems, in which a portion of a letter of a very personal character, wherein he described it, was perhaps injudiciously allowed to be published. Yet there is no doubt—and his poems and letters sufficiently evince it—that he did at this time pass through a mood of very deep sadness. “A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things,” and there was much in the past to make those houseless winter moorlands through which, a prey to memory and introspection, he wandered alone from day to day, look trebly drear and desolate. His own words are his own defence for his overthrow. The complaint was breathed into the ear of the constant close companion of his whole life :—

LETTER L. “*T—, Centre of Indifference, January 30, 1863.—. . . O et presidium et dulce decus meum!*—I have just indulged in a supreme luxury which I have not known, I may say, for years, and which I thought I was incapable of ever knowing again. What was it? Guess! You could n't. My friend,

cept that I admire it very much, even through the green-spectacles of Pope's translation. If you want to say anything about it, confine yourself to the great moral truth evolved from it. The wanderings of Ulysses symbolize the struggle of life. You have the Sirens, the Lotos-eaters, the Scylla and Charybdis, every day before you. Ay, and it requires you to be tied to the mast to resist the enchantments of idleness. The crew had their ears stopped with wax, but Ulysses struggled and strained every muscle to free himself from his bonds and join the company of the charmers. . . . This bosh may open up a fresh vein of criticism. . . .—Yours in 'tribulation (wholesome,' though), NED."

LETTER LII. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T—— *Workshop.*—*Feb. 2, 1863.*—My dear G\*\*,—The Creator of the Universe must have worked to produce the systems. . . . Jesus Himself worked for thirty years in a mean carpenter's shop. These considerations sanctify labour. No doubt, it and death are the terms of the primæval curse ; but, only as associated with pain and disappointment ; for Adam had plenty to do in dressing the garden before he tasted the forbidden fruit. . . .

"I am up every morning at daybreak, [studying]. . . I advise you to study science particularly, as it will make your head clear."

LETTER LIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, *Feb. 3, 1863.*—I read over to-day Longfellow's *Evangeline*.

It is the finest model for a pastoral that I am acquainted with. I have no time to write any poetry at present, as I am hard at work . . . . I vote a truce to poetry till May ! I get up early every morning, and go to bed at 10½ P.M. I am at work nearly all day. . . .

“I expect that this withdrawal of the mind from art will invigorate and refresh it. . .

“I propose that, instead of walking round the bleak North, we keep to our original plan and go down to Wicklow to revise. It will be infinitely more profitable, to say nothing about its agreeableness. What say you? . .

“Here it is snowing without cessation, and it has been snowing all night.

“My ‘Everlasting Yea’ is the Divinity of Work and the Diabolic Nature of the Inertiæ Dulcedo—only this, and nothing more. . .—Your aff. . . , NED.”

Just at this time a letter was written to him detailing some then recent occurrences in connection with the followers of Irving, from whose ceremonies and maniacal ravings he had received so many disagreeable impressions in his childhood. It called forth a commentary, quoted in the early pages of these Memoirs, the most remarkable words in which, as indicating an important phase of mental development in himself, are these :—“Mark what particular care they took *to save their souls* ! A singularly instructive history, pardie !” The next

day he concluded a letter by saying that "several questions pressed just then heavily upon him ;" of which the first and chief was, whether he should enter the Church or not. On the 9th he wrote, enclosing his poem "*Usque Quo, Domine ?*", and saying, "Accept my work of yesterday, which is a rough production, but which is a genuine cry from the bottom of my soul. Read it to C\*\*\*\*\*, if you think it worth while." And on the 10th he declared, "At present I stand thus :—I believe in Christianity, but I do not believe in Christ. In other words, I cannot find within my moral being any warrant for believing that the sacrifice of Christ has done me any service." The poem "*Usque Quo, Domine ?*", which forms the first of an admired series of lyrics which he used to call his "Penitential Trilogue," represented, he himself stated, the particular attitude of his mind at this moment. It was followed, at short intervals, by the stanzas entitled "*Levavi Oculos*," and the fine poem "*Quid Gloriaris ?*"; and I think these poems fairly exhibit in their sequence three great stages in his advance to his utmost point of religious belief, from the time when first the personality of Christ began to reassume for him the aspect of a reality.

During this period, and, indeed, day and night for many a month before and after, his mind would stray back over the happy past ; and several of his letters enshrine the memory of dreams and reveries,



both sweet and sad, growing out of these retrospects :—

LETTER LIV. (*To G. F. A.*)—" *T—*, *February* 12, 1863. . . . Well, let us 'trust the hand that guides the helm,' but let us endeavour to dispel the mists of languor from our eyes. All may yet be well. . .

" . . . It is delightful weather here, warm, genial, luxurious. The snowdrops and the yellow lilies sparkle like silver and gold among the grasses and mosses of the valleys. I think of Ultima Thule, and a cold shudder runs through my veins, only to render my sense of perfect bliss more perfect as I gaze on the sweet landscape around me. I care not to wish for Heaven here. No happiness can ever equal mine. Everything that I ever desired is now within my grasp,—wealth, fame, love, residence in the spot dearest to me in this world. Will you ever come over to the little Isle, and pay me a visit? I walked with her to-day by the shores of St. Brelade's, in the calm morning air. The crags smiled upon us and the ripples on the sands reëchoed our merry laughter. She is more than I ever dreamed. Beautiful and good, sensitive and poetical. I read her my last poem, as we lay on the sward above Janvrin's Tomb, and she praised it in glowing words. I set a high value on your criticisms, but they are as rubies to diamonds compared [with] hers. O, the loveliness that shone in

her deep eyes as we returned slowly round the craggy base of Noirmont, while the bay gleamed like an Italian lake, and the dreamlike outline of Coutances Cathedral loomed in the east afar! I described the view we beheld from that ancient tower in the old pedestrian days, long years ago—the clanging of the bells, the cawing of the frightened rooks, the simpering gossip of Madame le Sacristan, and the querulous chatter of the poor old tradesman who had returned to his native Norman town, after fifty years, to die.<sup>1</sup> She seemed amused and touched. We planned a tour in Normandy for next month, and we shall stay a month or so in Paris too. Will you meet us there with——. . . Such was my dream last night, and I awoke in an agony, you may deem. I did n't sleep for a long time, but a new thought presented itself to my mind vividly, too vividly, for it has not kept its hues of reality, alas! I thought and believed that there would come a time when we shall experience a realization of our wildest aspirations, but in a manner totally different from what we calculated upon. Freed from the grossness of this corporeal weight, we should live in a perpetual state of unalloyed, unimaginable bliss. What the bliss may be, we know not; but may we not believe that something higher than our highest yearnings, lovelier than our loveliest visions, is yet in store for us hereafter? Now the case stands thus:—We

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 363.—Ed.

*have* known something very close to perfect happiness, and our lives are spent in endless and wearisome calculations to bring about a repetition of that happiness, and we are worn away by a hope that, were it in our hands once more, we could certainly improve and heighten it. Are we or are we not upon the wrong trail? Shut your eyes to the moonlight splendours of the past, and contemplate in your mind the unspeakable glory of an eternity of bliss.—Your aff. . . , E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER LV. (*To G. F. A.*).—“*T*——, *February* 18, 1863. . . . ‘Iambus’ is an elaborate college prizeman, *factus ad unguem*. Let him wear the collegiate laurel; he won’t keep it green, or win a higher crown. The academic garland fits his poet-brows—it is the only one that fits them.

“I am sorry to hear that you are so weak. . . . I wish I was with you . . . Nevertheless, in this confounded ‘pilgrimage of life,’ we can’t always have what we desire, indeed hardly ever. I don’t say I have a strong faith in a better world, as I can’t realize it; but I would bid you *to try* to hope for it.

“*Mercredi Saint*—is it? I forget. Do you remember Monsieur Le Rev. Martin’s sermon last Ash Wednesday? . . . We had one aristocratic pancake a-piece last night, and I thought with a sentimental sigh of Mrs. Ste.-Croix’s apple-fritters and Jersey-wonders. . . —Your aff. . . , EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER LVI. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, February 21, 1863. . . . I send you the following highly finished lyric, my work of to-day.

"THE OPERA.

"O, wild and sweet the soul's emotion

On the ocean

Where the waves of music mingle,

Eddying, whirling, golden-crested,

Borne along, and quivering lest it

Wheel to death in wizard motion !

How the maddened pulses tingle !

Every single

Rippling sound that faintly dashes

On the frosty crust of fashion,

Thrills the heart with holier passion,

Fills the eye with nobler flashes ;

Till the purse's silver jingle

Rings no longer

Like a melody elysian !

Till the ruby-spangled vision

Of the courts, the camps, the dances,

Glowing words and sparkling glances,

Life's ten thousand brilliant chances,

Die away, replaced by trances

Of delicious, agonizing,

Soul-annihilating bliss ! . .

Ah me, hath it come to this ?

All my pathos quenched in bathos ?

All my frenzy come to smash ?

With an unexpected crash

Tumbled into awful trash ? . .

"MORAL.

"Youthful poets, be not rash.

Keep in mind the useful story

Of how Icarus missed glory.—

“Now, I protest that I began this piece with a most serious poetic fever raging in my vitals, causing me to bite my nails furiously, and grind my teeth implacably !—Yours, in despair, [E. J. A].”

The following letter, addressed to a gentleman with whom he had been on terms of intimacy for some years, and was now in frequent correspondence, is so strikingly characteristic of the writer that, although it has perhaps no other bearings on this narrative, it may well take its place here :—

LETTER LVII. (*To Mr. \*\*\*\*\**).—“*Cimmeria*, Feb. 25, 1863.—My dear \*\*\*\*\*,—This is to acquaint you with the fact (if you care to know it) that, having this day read your poem *L—*, I this day begin to feel for you a warm brotherly friendship, which I never felt before. Forgive the patronizing impertinence ; it is not meant as such, I assure you. The exquisite feeling and sublime pathos of that little lyric have revealed to me, as by a flash of sudden light, depths in your character which I never even suspected hitherto. This day marks my recovery from a stubborn intellectual blindness. I recognize in thee, for the first time, a true human heart.

“Now, it strikes me as being very remarkable that this poem, which is the first of yours I have yet known to ring perfectly harmonious changes on the ‘sweet sad music of humanity,’ should also be the very best you have ever written. In breadth,

in depth, in pathos, in sublimity, nay, even in structure, expression, and melody, it is most undoubtedly your *chef d'œuvre*. Why don't you always write in this style? Confound you! that lyric may take its place at any time as a fixed star in the poetical firmament. I envy you for it, but it has made me like you as I never did before.—Yours,  
EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

In his absence, he had been elected a member of a literary society of his college, now well known as the Philosophical Society of Dublin University; and it was proposed to him that he should read a paper before this association on his going up to Dublin for his Term Examination in April. He hailed the proposition gladly, and resolved to remodel for the purpose the essay on Shelley which he had written when in Jersey in the spring of 1862. “Send me my essay on Shelley by return of post,” he wrote; “I have so little time on hands that I could only afford to polish that essay, cut out the infidelistic passages, and substitute Christian philosophy.” . . . “I should like you to arrange that I can read it on Thursday, April 16, the day after I go up; as that will leave me free to make up for the confounded examination.” And on the 14th March he announces—“The essay is finished. . . . I have written to \*\*\*\*\*, to ask him whether I may touch on the philosophy of Shelley. The peroration is mainly occupied with this subject;

but, if illegitimate, I can strike it out and substitute something else."

In the same letter he shows that his mind was amusing itself with other schemes :—

"I am reading law intelligence," he says, "for the purpose of manufacturing a humourous action for damages between Poetry, the plaintiff, and The Novel, the defendant. 'The following jury was sworn :— John Soundheart, foreman ; Lorenzo Languish, Byron Brummagem, Shakespeare Small-brains, &c., &c., &c. Mr. Periodical Forcepump, Q. C., stated the case for the plaintiff. Speech given. Serjeant Bookworm for the defendant. Speech given. Witnesses sworn and examined, and cross-examined—the later poets of the nineteenth century for the plaintiff ; the later novelists of ditto for the defendant. Judge Featherbrain's charge. Verdict, guilty. Sentence deferred.' That is the abstract, and I could make a roaring piece of wit and wisdom out of it. . .—Yours, &c., NED."

In the next, he sends a long extract from the remodelled essay on Shelley, the style of which he declared "oscillated between Victor Hugo and the Rebel Proclamations of the Young Ireland party ;" but added that it was "the only downright mad passage in the whole." And throughout the essay he purposely adopted varieties of style in order to test, as far as might be, by their effects upon the audience, the worth of the several kinds.

On the 23rd March he writes—

LETTER LVIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, *March* 23, 1863 .. Last night I lay awake a long time and deduced a great many important conclusions from a long train of careful thought. Among them I have succeeded in condensing the rules for authors, orators, poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians into the following two :—1. Master the minutest details of the highest models, and become familiarized with viewing them comprehensively. 2. Learn, by studying Nature, to surpass these models, which are only copies . . . . . I also hit upon an illustration. . . It is this. Men regard life as a gorgeous temple, whose exits lead into a void, unknown and therefore terrible. They should rather consider it the vestibule of the temple, cold, dilapidated, and gloomy. The doors of the temple are black as midnight, but, every time a soul is admitted therein, the splendour of the interior flashes for a moment from the opened valves. . . ."

The satirical novel of *Dublin Castle*, the plot of which he had strongly recommended to one of his friends, he now urged upon the latter's consideration earnestly again, his wish being to rouse him from a temporary fit of despondency by inducing him to absorb himself in some light and amusing task.

". . I have written," he adds, "to 'P. Q.' once more, to urge him to write a satirical novel on *Dublin Castle*. If this attempt fail to rouse him, I vote that we all



take the subject in hand. I have devised a plot, which would undergo considerable improvement by being subjected to [our] united criticism . . . . When the plot is complete, and when we have formed a rough cast of the characters, we should each select our own portions of the work, and meet once a week in conclave to compare notes and report progress. 'P. Q.' could collect most of the materials and write all the grotesque parts. 'X.' could undertake the more solid portions of the work, and could treat the subject of the Vice-Regency and the higher court-officials with hyper-Thackerayan sarcasm. You could take in hand several of the minor characters, and some of the descriptions of scenery, reviews, 'trooping the colours,' &c. I could manage the rest of the minor characters and descriptions of town and college life, the opera, . . and country-life in Ireland. And we could all conjointly manufacture the most telling passages, as they would suggest themselves. . . . Once the plot is cast, there would be no difficulty whatever in following it, each in his own peculiar department. The only obvious defect would be a want of harmony in style ; but (1) that could be toned down by united revisal, and (2) if each man treats a completely different subject [from the rest], the difference of style will be only what would be naturally expected . . . It is a magnificent subject for a satire. It would be a positive sin if none of us should take it up. . . . It would be the

Court of Plumpernickel eclipsed. . . —Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

But the project came to nought, and all that exists of the novel is his own hastily-scribbled sketch of the plot, arrangement of the chapters, and cast of the characters (including such personages as "Captain Antinous Slimm, A. D. C. ; Mr. Corpus Rattlekeys, State Verger ; Sir Polonius Pry, Connaught King-at-Arms," &c.) ; and the proposed title-page, bearing the inscription—

"THE CASTLE :  
A TALE OF THE IRISH COURT.  
BY  
GOLIAH HOP-O'-MY-THUMB,  
PERICLES PUMP,  
AND  
ELIJAH AND GABRIEL FITZBLUSH."

The marriage of the Prince of Wales was about to take place, and the Board of Trinity College, as a mark of loyal respect, had offered a prize, to be bestowed upon the writer among the students of the University who should produce, by a specified date, the best Ode in celebration of that event. It was suggested to Armstrong that he should compete. This was a kind of prostitution of the muse of which he had an intense abhorrence. But on this occasion he thought he might be pardoned if he tried the experiment of sending in three different

poems in three different measures, and marked the result. The spirit in which he sat down to write may be divined from the preliminary invocation in his pencil-draft—

“Prospect of thirty pounds, my pen inspire,  
And scorch my paper with poetic fire !  
Be near my desk, to aid me, good King Mammon,  
And tinge with hues of gold my sentimental gammon !”

The occupation was first regarded with amusement, and then with mock-solemn admiration and interest, as the postscript to a letter of the 29th March further displays—“P.S. The Prince's marriage is really a very fine subject. . . . What an advantage it must have been to have witnessed the demonstrations in Dublin ! The ebullition of public feeling and gas must have worked up your citizens to a frenzy of loyalty. Now, I, in these uncivilized regions, saw nothing splendid except a bonfire and the flash of a big blunderbuss, the shock of which knocked me down. A remarkably clean-shaved clown leapt through the bonfire, and another clown cried out, ‘Do you smell his *whusker* ?’—These are the associations of my idea of the happy event.” Nevertheless, he warmed to the subject as he wrote, and the result was that the only serious poem of his three was selected for honourable mention, and he was requested to appear before the examiners, to receive their con-

gratulations, criticism, and advice ; which were accepted with gratification and respect.

Eastertide was approaching, with pleasanter associations than the "whiskers" of an Ulster bumpkin, or even the divine alchemy of "thirty pounds"—with happy dreams of his wanderings in the bygone year ; and the letters which this season suggested are interesting for the contrasts they describe between the present and the past, and for their hopeful recognition of progress :—

LETTER LIX. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, *Le Dimanche du Buis Bénit*, 1863. . . . Last *Dimanche du Buis Bénit*, we were sauntering through the hoary capital of Normandy, *nostræ cunabula gentis*.<sup>1</sup> To-day we are separated by a hundred miles of bog and mountain, trudging to our respective places of

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to his descent on his mother's side from the ancient Anglo-Norman house of the Savages of Ardkeen, Rock Savage (Ballygalget), and Glastry, in Downshire—the "Lords of the Ards." His grandfather, Mr. Savage of Glastry, remembered having been carried out, when a little child, from the old feudal Castle of Ardkeen (on the shores of Lough Strangford), the residence of *his* grandfather, one stormy night, on the alarm being given that the venerable structure was tumbling about its occupants' ears ! Armstrong himself in his childhood had been made heir to Glastry House and extensive lands by his maternal uncle, with whom, in his earliest years, he was a great favourite and plaything. Had he lived but a little longer, he would have come into possession, not of the House and the lands, but of the remnant of the proceeds of their sale !—ED.

worship. . . . We are better off a thousandfold to-day than we were last year—ay, a thousandfold ! We have advanced in the thorny pathway of life. We have learned to worship the Divinity of Labour. We have passed the Rubicon of our chosen careers. The die is cast. *Quod felix faustumque sit in eternum.* . . . We have achieved a signal victory over the *dolce far niente*. We have recognized the true principle of happiness—doing good to our fellow-men, which is ‘our Father’s business.’ To Him be the praise ! May we never forget that we must work for His glory and not for our own ! May we never forget that life is short, ‘but that Love is as strong as Death’ (Solomon’s *Epithalamium*), and that the true love is His who so loved us that He gave His only Son to die for us ! Let us be superior to Fame. Let us devote ourselves to what is nobler far. What is it after all ? A few tinsel compliments, and an offering of sweet incense to vanity—vanity, the lowest of our weaknesses, which we share with the peacock and the turkey. A strut and a swollen hackle and a mellifluous gobble-gobble to our own littleness ! Human genius, human fame ! Gaudy feathers and a discordant crow from a dunghill, striking admiration into the hens and sparrows ! (I advise you not to imbibe this energetic style of eloquence.) Once more, let us be superior to Fame by this time next year, and believe me,—NED.”

LETTER LX. (*To G. F. A.*) — “*T—, Good Friday, 1863. Vendredi Saint. . . .* This day last year we were sauntering about through the Madeleine, the Boulevards, Notre Dame, &c.<sup>1</sup> But to-day I am infinitely happier, strange to say. . . . Souvenez-vous du Bourdon, la grande cloche de Notre Dame? It is clashing and booming away now over the modern Babylon, very probably. Nearly as fine a bell will roar from the Campanile of our University on the day when . . . so likewise, alas, will it boom on the mornings of our approaching examinations! I wish I could realize the latter fact as perfectly as I realize the former just at present. But a delicious laziness creeps through my veins like—like—like an injection of Ichor (O ye Gods, and especially Æsculapius!), and I feel myself dying, dying, dying into the echo of an echo of an echo. . . . My dear G\*\*, I am about to confide to you a great secret, which has always exercised a paramount influence on my life. Fine weather agrees with me. The weather has been fine for the last week. Therefore, I am in a state of delirious, blissful, wholesome idleness. Q. E. D. . . .—Yours, NED.”

LETTER LXI. (*To G. F. A.*) — “*T—, Easter Monday, 1863. . . .* Yes, and this day last year was a Sunday, and this time this day last year you and I were in the Bocage, toiling with sore feet

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 354.—ED.

towards 'Villainous Blockheads,'<sup>1</sup> and in the evening we arrived at Caen.<sup>2</sup> . . . I can't work, I give it up in despair. There be three chaps, staying here for the holidays, who idle me, and we are making preparations to go fishing for the day, and also to move the day after to-morrow to S——e. This day three weeks I shall be biting my fingers over the Science papers. Up tails all ! . . . Could you manage to frighten me into work ? ”

He was to go up to Dublin in the beginning of the next week, and on the Thursday evening following was to read his essay *On the Characteristics of Shelley* before the Philosophical Society. His friends, who knew the purport of the paper, were looking forward with much interest to his arrival, and to an event, which, however trifling and ordinary its like might be in the life of many another, brought *him* back into the field of his early activity under such changed circumstances. He wondered whether his old class-fellows would recognize his name, and, if certain of them came down to hear him, how he should feel as he expounded before them doctrines so different from those which he failed to hide from them four years before. But he regarded a retractation of some kind a duty, and, however painful the self-imposed task, he was not the man to shrink from discharging it. That duty fulfilled,

<sup>1</sup> A nickname for Villiers Bocage.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 330.—ED.

he was much more eager for a mountain-walk which was to follow, and which he had long before planned, than for whatever poor little literary success he might appear at the moment to achieve. "I look forward," he wrote, "with far greater pleasure to the day we are all to spend in Wicklow than I should to any tinsel display in Trinity College. I vote we go to the Devil's Glen, as it is the scene of my next poem, and I have not visited it since 1860. This is selfish, of course, but I daresay none of you have any particular choice."

He went up to Dublin on the 18th. His friend had planned an interesting debate for his pleasure in the College Historical Society, and he had the gratification, long desired, of hearing his old correspondent speak publicly, for the first time; and then a speech from the present Bishop of Peterborough, for whose eloquence, clear keen logic, and biting sarcasm he already entertained much admiration. When, the following evening, he went to the College, to read his long-expected essay, only two or three of his former class-fellows were in the room. These looked upon him as upon a man risen from the dead. They warmly welcomed him. But where was his audience? The President—the most distinguished of his old competitors—urged an immediate adjournment to the following Thursday. The proposition was agreed to, and the rest of the evening was spent in exhilarating conversation with his friends.



In the interval he thus writes to his “unknown correspondent,” now no longer unknown—a letter which should be compared with that of October 13, 1861, quoted above:—

LETTER LXII. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*Kingstown, April 21, 1863.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—If you do n’t come with us on Saturday, you must dine with us on Friday; and if you do n’t dine with us on Friday, you must come with us on Saturday; and if you do n’t do either, you must dine with us on Wednesday-week, the last day I shall be in town. On these points I am quite inexorable, so do n’t imagine you will impose upon me with excuses.

“I am afraid I have not yet succeeded in throwing aside my clinging curse of reserve, while in your company; but on those last occasions when we met, I felt perfectly at home with you; which I never felt before. Wait for a little while, and I shall be able perhaps to appear as I feel. I know I am a different man in my letters from what I appear in my conversation, and I know you must still find it hard to reconcile the two. Yet a stray word and an unconscious look assure me that you make allowances for me now. . . . So, even though we do not meet each other so often as I could desire, I can trust you for trusting me, and this is much more than a luxury.

“This habit of mine of subtilizing our feelings may perhaps contribute to reserve at present, but

I am sure it will make us understand one another thoroughly hereafter. If it is morbid, therefore, the best way to cure it is to tell you of it. Subtilize I must—it is my nature—but, if I do, I shall not conceal it from you any more. In comparing my feelings towards [B\*\*\*\*\*] and G\*\*\*\*\* with my feelings towards you, I am led to suspect that we have not yet quite emancipated ourselves from the habit of expecting too much of each other; but, notwithstanding this, I have the most perfect faith that we are closer now than ever, and that we shall yet become closer still. . . .—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

And again—

LETTER LXIII. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*Kingstown, April 22, 1863.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—2 evenings of 6 hours each = 12 hours; 1 day of study = 12 hours (?); ∴ 2 evenings = 1 day. Therefore, and as no person can do as much work by day as he can by night, why not come to the Devil’s Glen with us on Saturday, and never mind the evenings? I consider this a conclusive argument, and therefore I shall say nothing about the advantages to a reading-man of country air, green fields, babbling rivulets, mountain scenery, &c., &c. (*Qu.* Is this a rhetorical device?) But if you are not to be persuaded, then come on Tuesday evening, as it will be the same to me as Wednesday. . . .—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

The next evening was that for the adjourned

meeting of the Philosophical Society, and the anticipations of his fellow-students were now verified, and the room was crowded. Among the faces of those present he recognized many familiar ones, reminding him painfully enough of his young ambitions and hopes, and his arrested progress. He rose with many emotions crowding within him; and as he continued to read, in a voice singularly rich and musical, more and more the sense of his position grew upon him. The older portion of the essay, recalling the tenderest memories of the spring of 1861; the glorious passages of Shelley's writings which he had selected as extracts; the paragraphs written so recently in his solitude; the presence of his earliest bosom-friend "of the mountain days," who had gone with him through that "valley of the shadow of death" which he was now vividly describing; of his old correspondent, with whom hand in hand, he had arisen, in strange brotherhood, from those moods of violent revolt against which he now inveighed; of the companion of his sadder days of broken health, and his days of happy recovery and adventure; and the rows of young faces opposite and around him; and the place itself—all, by their associations, by their suggestions, combined to lift him to a state of intensest feeling and intensest imagination; and he spoke like one tranced in some prophetic vision. In reading the sublime passage from *Prometheus Unbound*, beginning—

“And from the other opening in the wood  
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,—”

he seemed quite carried away by the images which he had never before realized with such exalted rapture. He was listened to with unbroken attention; and, when he closed the book, the first outburst of applause was loud and prolonged, and the plaudits were renewed again and again. Such was his first evening in a Society of which he was to win the highest places and prizes; and which he was to lead still farther upward in its honourable course. He had once more become a student among students, and his long, and often painful, isolation was now almost at an end. He spoke little of that evening's proceedings, but they affected him more than words could say. Let it pass.

A glad day in the Devil's Glen and its beautiful woods wound up his visit, and has for its surviving literary result the ballad of *Mary of Clorah*, since quoted in several collections, and made familiar to some audiences, I am told, by the reading of Mrs. Scott-Siddons.

A few days after his return to the North, he wrote—

LETTER LXIV. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, May 5, 1863. . . . We are fearfully and wonderfully made. The body and all the affections of the body are base, material, common to the beasts of the earth, earthly. It is hard to conceive of the spirit, that

which is always warring with the flesh, as immaterial, a something which is as nothing of which our senses take cognizance, the immortal part, the I and Thou. The best proof that the soul is the fundamental reality of our being is that by its instrumentality we can ascertain the qualities, &c., of all substantial things, even of our bodies themselves; but of the soul itself we have no adequate conception. . . .—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER LXV. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*May 7, 1863. Scene—A Library, looking out upon leafless Copper-beeches; a Moor in the distance.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—This letter will claim to be interesting as being an example of the nearest approach which a man can make to creation, being or about to be literally spun out of nothing.

“I am very solitary and very sad, and I am afraid that the year 1862-3 will look very black when I reflect on it through the vista of the future. It presents a horrible contrast to the two years spent for the most part in Jersey, when a face seen twice on Sunday was sufficient to keep me in Paradise till the end of the week. It is now just a year since I was there—*i. e.* in Paradise or in Jersey, whichever you please.

“Furthermore, I envy you. I know what I ought to do, but I am a weak fool, and, beset with temptations, I have not courage to withstand them like a man. I am afraid of being laughed at, if I

speak of those things of which I ought to speak. In a few months you will be laughed at, if you do not speak of them, and you will be praised for doing so. I may perhaps congratulate myself on having suddenly lighted upon the discovery that I am a coward; but this does not mitigate my envy of you.

“ Finally, I am in a very bad humour with myself and everybody, and I intend to write to you or L\*\*\*\* whenever I feel as I do now. Just because I feel the better for it, and (saith Bacon) ‘a man were better relate himself to a statue or picture than let his thoughts pass in smother.’ Did you ever try solitude for any length of time? *Do n’t*. I have turned the rustic mind inside out like a dirty stocking, with about the same result. I begin to disbelieve with L\*\*\*\* in the fisherman’s hut.<sup>1</sup> It is a base calumny on the town to say that there ‘we rub each other’s angles down.’ The truth is that man has by nature no angles at all—they come by mutual attrition. Iron sharpeneth iron; so doth a man the countenance of his friend.—Yours, somewhat relieved, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

On the 11th May he writes, “I am trying to hit off a character to the life in my lyric entitled *Mary of Clorah*.” But now he was about to undertake the

<sup>1</sup> A certain dialogue alluded to here is worked into metre in the little lyric “Sense and Common Sense.” See “Poetical Works.”—ED.

longest work in verse which he was destined to complete.

His friend Mr. C\*\*\*\*\* having sent him, for his criticism, the sketch of a plot on which he seemed to think a novel of the "sensational" class, then floating in the stream of popular favour, might fairly be constructed, he commented upon it in the following terms :—

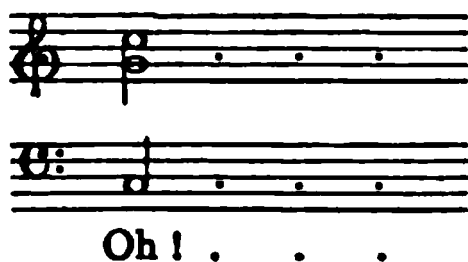
LETTER LXVI. (*To G. A. C.*)—"May 22, 1863. T——, *Dismal Swamp, &c., &c.*—My dear \*\*\*\*\*,—The sketch you have sent me I unhesitatingly pronounce to be an admirable plot for a sensation novel, and I advise you, if you want to awake some morning and find yourself famous, to set about it vigorously at once. You will pardon me if I add that I entertain the most undiluted contempt for sensation novels, and therefore I feel it my bounden duty to adjure you, by your hopes of immortality, to write no more than one book of the sort. A sensation novel is like a sky-rocket—*one* does not constitute a pyrotechnic display ; and the excruciating birth-throes of Wilkie Collins and Miss Braddon ought to be a warning to all pious Christians. But send up your rocket to catch the eye of the public, and, when once you have secured this object, invite them to a more rational entertainment for the years to come, and you will possibly build yourself an everlasting name. . . . I expect from you a novel in the true sense of the word. I

know you will leaven your raw dough with better materials than we find the sensationalists of the day to possess. . . . . I have likewise a faint presentiment that you will interweave a deep moral with your frightful plot; and so, good luck to you, and that you may be well rid of the 'sensation' fever, and come out of it with no more serious calamity than a reputation which you must replace hereafter with something more substantial! . . . In consideration for all this patronage, I wish you would send me a plot for a *Sensation Poem*—something sulphurous and diabolical, if you please; and I shall feel eternally obliged to you. I am quite in earnest. Give me an explosive plot, and I will set it blazing magnificently. To recur to the example of Collins and Miss Braddon, it is manifest that any person who has a gift that way, can turn them out with marvellous fecundity. So you will not miss one plot, even should you decide upon becoming a literary incendiary by profession. Be charitable and give me something very atrocious, and, by the horrors of nightmare, I'll acknowledge my obligations in the preface! There!— . . . . .

" *Whit-Sunday, May 24.*—I was obliged to stop writing on Friday, and I have had no opportunity of resuming the pleasant labour till now. At the present moment I am in the most unamiable mood conceivable. \*\*\*\*\*'s Wordsworth—a book I valued even above our jointly-illustrated Tennysons—has



been purloined by some literary housemaid, or spirited away by my good genius as a lesson for having perpetrated *Clorah*. May all the ———. And the worst of it is that I had commenced an essay on *The Characteristics of Wordsworth*, and the book was a premium obtained by \*\*\*\*\*, for being best in Shakespeare out of the whole of N\*\*\*\*'s School. Besides, it had curious hieroglyphical annotations, unintelligible to the exoteric world, but pregnant with strange delightful meaning to \*\*\*\*\* and me. I wish you understood the practice, and I the theory, of music, and I should endeavour to convey the full idea of my vexation by a written howl, somewhat thus :—



. . . . Strange and wonderful and past all credence ! The literary housemaid has just appeared at the door and restored the book ! Rejoice with me ! And forgive me for attaching so much importance to such a trifle. . . . Now the incubus of despair is removed. . . .—Yours, E. J. ARMSTRONG."

The answer to the request contained in this letter took the form of a generous offer from Mr. C\*\*\*\*\* to place the plot which he had originated entirely at Armstrong's service. Armstrong thought over

the plot, thought over the offer, and proposed the following bargain :—

LETTER LXVII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"T——, *May* 29, 1863. . . . I will try a passionate poem in blank verse, with lyrics interspersed, on the subject of your abandoned novel—on two conditions; *first*, that, if you think my poem *in esse* inferior to your novel *in posse*, you will tell me so honestly, that I may consign it to my extensive collection of poetical *exercises*, that 'the many-headed beast' may never know anything about it; and, *secondly*, that, if you think it better than the novel you would write, you will allow me to acknowledge my obligation. I know very well it is downright greediness on my part; but I rely on my own incapacity and your candour that it will never see the light reflected by the reading public.

"I have a superabundance of time on hands now, and I want something more exciting to work upon than the *Devil's Glen*; and I feel that, if I were to work exclusively at the latter, it would turn out an enlarged edition of *Clorah*. These are my only excuses for my shark-like voracity. . . .

"I have written 400 lines already. I have Frenchified the story, and called it *The Prisoner of Mont St. Michel*. So far, so good. The difficulties of the plot are still before me. . .—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

The more he considered the plot, the more it

seemed to commend itself to him—not that its atrocities were in any way congenial to his tastes, but because he believed it might be worked up into a stirring narrative poem in a new style ; and the idea of writing a long poem to present to his friend by a certain appointed day, was one quite after his heart. In one of his earlier letters, he describes a little glen that lies on one side of the demesne in which stands the house that had become his temporary home. Through this glen runs a mountain-stream, and above the stream is a rustic summer-house, a quiet secluded retreat, where he had written many a line, and built up many a dream. Here the first draft of the *Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael* was now dashed off with great rapidity. Day after day he sought refuge in the little summer-house, overlooking the mountain-stream ; and there, sitting, pencil and MS.-book in hands, and the much-loved pipe in his mouth, he dreamed and wrote, lost, beyond all hope of recall to prosaic realities, in his imaginings, in reminiscences of Normandy, in visions of adventures, and in the passions and agonies of his unhappy hero. When a goodly number of lines were written, he would walk up and down in the wood, reading them aloud ; and then return again to the sanctuary and continue his writing. For some time his letters contain hardly anything except allusions to this poem ; and the dates of place with which he headed them, ex-

hibit his jocose enjoyment of his own absorption in the work. But the first draft was written in a very few days.

LETTER LXVIII. (*To \*\*\*\*\**)—"T——, May 30, 1863. . . . I am anxious to ['spend a week in Jersey and a few days in Brittany'] for another reason besides the one you wot of.

"Videlicet !—

"I am hard at work, morning, noon, and night, at a *Sensation Poem*, called *The Prisoner of Mont St. Michel*, which is C\*\*\*\*\*'s novel-plot (given to me most kindly), Frenchified, blank-versified, and terribly intensified—abounding in Norman scenery and Breton superstitions, interspersed with charming lyrics as light as a *vaudeville*, and worked up in the most thrilling manner by half-concealing the real character of the heroine till near the conclusion of the poem. It is a new experiment in poetry. . . . With God's help, I will publish it before the year is over, with a dedication to [G. A. C.], acknowledging the obligations of the author; and we will follow it up as closely as possible with the Wicklow volume.

"I have written 400 lines already, so you need n't say a word. I want something exciting to keep me from falling into a most slovenly style of poetic composition—a habit that was fast growing upon me. And I will write the *Devil's Glen*, and polish and reconstruct my other poems later on in the

year. Thus you will have ample time to overtake me, and we will not lose by letting our eight poems lie over for further consideration. . . It is the most exciting, the most absorbing work I was ever engaged in. . .—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER LXIX. (To G. F. A.)—“ *Trinity Sunday, 1863. Condemned Cell, Mont St. Michel.*—My dear G\*\*,—As I am the Prisoner of Mt. St. Michel at present, body and soul, and as I am raving blank-verse like a madman, at the rate of 150 lines a-day, I have no time to copy out . . . But I send you the draft thereof in pencil.

“ You may tell C\*\*\*\*\*, that, although I am at present of course only hewing out the rough block, I am getting on to my entire satisfaction. Tell him too, with my compliments, that he is the ‘decentest’ fellow in the world, as he has made my exile sweet, and given me more excitement and pleasure than ever was afforded me by the realities of life. Tell him too that his story would never have done in an English dress, but French costume suits it admirably. Tell him too that I am confident of making a magnificent poem out of it, but I still think his novel would be better. Tell him too that I’ll not read him a line of it till it is elaborated, and tuned, and toned, and finished *ad unguem*. Tell him too that this consummation will not take place till October or November, although I devoutly purpose to work at it every day till it is perfect. Tell

him, finally, that I am resolved to stick by my bargain. And you may add, that I am [a] dogged worker when I take it into my head. . . .—Yours, EDMUND ST. MICHEL ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER LXX. (*To G. F. A.*)—*June 2, 1863.* “*Condemned Cell, Mont St. Michel.*—My dear G\*\*,—I have raved off 1000 lines. Rough, *mostly*, but that’s easily remedied. About a third of the entire work is accomplished thus in 4 days.  $\frac{1000}{4} = 250$  lines a-day.—Thanks for the book. I am going, sore against my will, to S——e, to spend the day, so must bid good-bye. I shall be up on or about Wednesday fortnight.—Yours, NED DE ST. MICHEL.”

Several letters which now follow are interesting as containing allusions to the principles on which he was working, and to his conception of the character of the hero, Édouard.

LETTER LXXI. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*T——, June 3, 1863.* . . . I thank you very much for your suggestions and advice, and I shall be very much obliged for the sketch of the temptation-scene. I have already adopted the idea of your second suggestion, from the very first line of the poem. I intended, however, to exclude perfection, moral perfection, entirely; and to make the husband of the heroine only a middle character, such as we see every day around us; and I think I shall adhere to this throughout. I quite agree with you that it was

cruel to say that I would conceal the progress of the work from you, who have supplied me with the idea of the picture, the colours, and the brush. But I think it would be only fair, in regard to our compact, not to let you *see* the work till it is complete, when you will be better able to judge of its effect as a whole. . . .

“ I have made a very few alterations in the plot as you gave it to me originally. I have transferred the scene to the sea-girt prison of Mont St. Michel, chiefly because the horrors of the story are of a character better suited to continental life than to the soil of Great Britain. . . . I have drawn the character of the father, an old Norman Count, as stern and haughty, and I shall complete the picture by making him proud of his lineage and utterly ignorant of the fact of his illegitimacy. I have made the rival a young Norman Marquis, the nephew of the heroine's father, the son of his younger brother, with whom he has been at feud through life ; and his animosity, after his brother's death, descends to his son. The hero himself is a Breton by birth, and the wild and beautiful superstitions of his country recur continually to his mind ; his character is that of a dastard, and he knows it, and bewails it as the cause of all his errors. The character of the young Marquis is exactly the opposite ; he is brave to an excess, but capable of some meanness withal ; and the contrast of the two

characters, brought out forcibly in a dramatic scene, inclines the heroine to forsake her first love, and inspires her with an intense selfish passion for her cousin.

"I have brought the story down to the appearance of the man who holds the fatal secret of her father's illegitimacy. She fascinates him and then murders him . . . . Excuse this hasty epistle, and rely upon it that I will not swerve from my first resolve, to consign the poem to my waste-paper collection, unless I am perfectly convinced that I have done better than you would, and unless you think so likewise. . . .—Yours, E. J. ARMSTRONG."

LETTER LXXII. (*To G. F. A.*)—"June 4, 1863. *Condemned Cell, Mont St. Michel.* . . . My guiding principle has been to sacrifice everything to the *idea* in the draft, and in elaborating hereafter to sacrifice everything to melody and beauty of expression. . . It is absorbing and engrossing in its interest. I'm afraid, though, that I have acted a sorry part towards C\*\*\*\*\*, in 'grabbing' his plot so rapaciously. However, I'll stick to my bargain, never to publish it unless he believes I have done better than he could have done. . . I wish you would tell C\*\*\*\*\* that the only drawback to my pleasure in writing this poem is the sense of having acted greedily towards him.

"I must now return to my work, as I have slept



late this morning, being disturbed all night with dreams of the stormy sea, the scaffold, the rust-red bars, the tolling of the castle-bell, the weird beauty of Louise, the blood-dripping corpse of her victim, the sweet melody of her voice urging her lover to the deed of blood, the 'dim-lit church of Dol,' the orchards and woodlands of Normandy, the quicksands, the binding of the Prisoner's arms, the terror of his weak, effeminate soul, and the God-given resolution which arms him with courage the first and last time in his wretched, sinful life.—NED."

LETTER LXXIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—"June 10, 1863. . . . The name of the poem is *The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael*. The motto on the title-page is from Wordsworth's *Laodamia*, and shows the author's own judgment of the character he personifies throughout the work :—

' The gods approve  
The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul ;  
The fervour, not the impotence, of love.' <sup>1</sup>

"The frontispiece is to be a view of Mont St. Michel at full tide. . . The first edition is to be without name or preface ; and, if it succeeds, the second will be adorned with an elegant dedicatory epistle to G. A. C., signed by the much-indebted author. . . .—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

LETTER LXXIV. (*To G. F. A.*)—"June 15, 1863.

<sup>1</sup> The reading in the edition of Wordsworth which he had before him.—ED.

*Condemned Cell, Mont St. Michel.* . . . I dreamt last night that you and I were condemned to be imprisoned for eighteen months for some imaginary offence. The agony with which we looked forward to the short term of separation from the world of thought and action was unendurable. I woke, and my mind instantly turned to the thought of eternal imprisonment from God, who is our world, our light, our sun, and moon, and stars. It is no fiction. I prayed earnestly for the divine grace to realize it constantly, and I heard within me a voice saying, 'Work, *work*, while it is yet day. *The night cometh*, wherein no man can work.' . . Ah, my brother, . . . let us labour in the mines of poetic thought for His glory, not for our own miserable fame. And let us be ready to throw aside even this, our dearest pursuit, if it interferes with our duty as His disciples. . . ."—

"THE PRISONER OF MOUNT SAINT MICHAEL.

A POEM

FIRST EDITION.

MUFF, GULL, & CO.,

LONDON:

GLORIA PATRI ROW,

1864,"

is the inscription on the title-page of the little MS.-book which contains the first pencil-draft of the poem which was now concluded. He was just about to return home for some weeks, and was to read the poem in secret to one friendly critic ;

and he wrote (*Letter to G. F. A., June 18, 1863*)—  
 “We must rise, the day after I arrive, at 5½ in the morning, to read.”

Very early in the bright June morning named they rose and wandered out along a lonely road ; and there, pacing backwards and forwards between the dewy meadows, he read aloud the whole poem as it had come fresh from his hand.

It has been considerably altered since that day, both by additions and amendments ; yet even then, in its roughest state, it seemed to reveal the presence of vast and ever-growing powers of thought, of imagination, of passion, and of utterance. It is harder to draw a weak character than a strong one, particularly if such a character is, in effeminacy, in cowardice, in indecision, in morbid inactivity, the very antithesis of one's own. In this feat the poet of *The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael* has succeeded ; and those only who knew him well in life, and those who have followed the course of this narrative and observed how courageous, how resolute, how pugnacious, how active in body and in mind, how self-devoting, how hopeful, and how humourous and frolicsome he was, can measure the thoroughness of dramatic portrayal which the character of the unhappy Prisoner presents. Something, doubtless, of his own pain and sadder experiences he *has* mingled with the fictitious agonies ; but *his* were those of the strong man who triumphs over

suffering and circumstance, the Prisoner's those of the coward who sinks beneath their weight. It has been objected to this poem that its personages are all unamiable. In his letters, above quoted, Armstrong clearly states that his object was to group together "middle characters;" and in the "Preamble" he distinctly announces that "the character of the hero is the reverse of the heroic." He held it to be a weakness always to paint strong or amiable characters, and a weakness not to be able to sympathize with the weak; and he often used to say that he was "tired of heroes of the admirable type." I think that this is one of the chief attractions of the poem, and an essential mark of its originality and boldness. In *Ovoca*—meant to be read side by side with it—he paints again "middle characters," but they are all of a lofty moral type, and they are all strong. These are companion-poems, and the characters are designed as contrasts. To me—perhaps partial, but, I believe, not blindly so—some of the passages in *The Prisoner* seem of unsurpassable beauty. The lyrics have won invariable admiration; some of them have been selected to be set to music by accomplished hands. But some of the blank-verse apostrophes and reveries are as musical as any lyric could ever be. Where is there a more pathetic bit of poetry, or a passage of blank-verse more lyrical in its cadences than that beginning—

"Lo, the wintry dawn  
Pierces the bars—dear light of heaven, farewell!"

The very rhythms of the sorrowful retrospect are like sighs. The immaturities of this poem are as nothing beside its passion, its pathos, its tenderness, its subtlety, its music, and its fine outbursts of description. And if the plot is a little ghastly and uncomfortable, let it be borne in mind that the design was to construct a "Sensation Poem." "It is an experiment," he writes in a note, "to test the adaptability of the elements of a sensational narrative to poetry, and as such I wish it to be considered by my readers." And when was such a plot ever employed as the vehicle of nobler expression? Few characters in the poetry of this generation seem to me of such palpable flesh, blood, and nerves as that sorrowful Prisoner of the Mount . . . but I crave the Critic's pardon: it is not my part to praise.

## CHAPTER XVI. 1863, ÆT. 21-22.

"Boat-Song."—Letter LXXV.: *Tribute to the late Judge \*\*\*\*\**.—Letter LXXVI.: *The Pleasure of Work*; "*The Lady of La Garaye*."—Letters LXXVII., LXXVIII.: *A Day among the Mountains*; *A Companion-Poem for "The Prisoner"*.—Letter LXXIX.: *Occupations*.—Letters LXXX., LXXXI.: *A Breton Sône*.—Letter LXXXII.: *The Mind and External Nature*.—Letter LXXXIII.: *The Morality of the New Testament and Inspiration of the Old—A Controversy*.—Letter LXXXIV.: *A Sanguine Assumption*.—Letter LXXXV.: *Morality of New Testament*.—Letter LXXXVI.: *A Dream of Normandy*.—Letter LXXXVII.: *Origin of Moral Ideas*.—Letter LXXXVIII.: *Irreconcilability of Old Testament with Modern Discoveries*.—Letter LXXXIX.: (A Letter of Introduction.)—Letter XC.: *Alternatives of Belief*.—Letter XCI.: *A Conversation on same theme*.—Studies and Poetry.—Letter XCII.: *Controversy suspended*; *Plans for the Future*.—Healthy Doctrines.—Happy Prospects.—Letters XCIII., XCIV.: *Moonlight Marches*.—Letters XCV., XCVI.: *Longings for Far Lands*.—Letters XCVII., XCVIII.: *Publishing Plans*.—Letter XCIX.: *A Dream of Foreboding*.—Letter C.: *A Generous Offer*; *Pleasant Anticipations*.—Letter CI.: *Revision of "The Prisoner" completed*.—Letter CII.: "*Ovoca*" projected.—Farewell to the North.—Compact fulfilled.—Letter CIII.: *Acknowledgment of Congratulations*.—Devotion to Art.

THE visit to his home in this summer of 1863 was spent in long walks in Wicklow, in dreamings and readings by the seaside, in boating—

excursions in rough and calm weather about the Bays of Dublin and Killiney and round the blue bights and rugged precipices of Bray Head : and it was a wild evening's row in stormy waters at this time that suggested his Boat-Song—"Time, boys ! time, boys !"—which he wrote down in pencil on the fly-leaf of a volume of *Les Derniers Bretons* that he happened to have with him when the fancy struck him.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of July he passed once more to the North, intending to remain there but two months longer ; and he soon resumes his correspondence :—

LETTER LXXV. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, August 1, 1863. . . . Well, old fellow, how are you getting on? . . . This place has changed its atmosphere somewhat, as Judge \*\*\*\*\* is here, and will be as long as I am here, which is a great comfort to me, forasmuch as he is a man of the world, who has seen 'the climes and manners of unnumbered men'—including Jersey, of which we talk in dreamful reverie. He is, besides, a man of intellect, and his memory is wonderful. So he entertains me by many a quaint story, and many a noble passage from Edmund Burke and other famous orators. Add to this, as a magnificent

<sup>1</sup> This song has been set to spirited music by a talented composer, Mr. R. F. Harvey, but in the first impression, by an unfortunate slip, a wrong initial was given with the author's name.—ED.

climax, he smokes ! He and I smoke together, and the pipe assists communicativeness amazingly. Add to this *distraction*, that I have an immense quantity of work to do. I am up at six o'clock, and reading hard. . . . So you see I have so many weapons to use against the Devil, that he is not likely to make much of me till I come up again.—Yours ever, hoping you are likewise full of business,—NED.”

LETTER LXXVI. (*To G. F. A.*)—“ *T*——, August 3, 1863. . . . It will be all right by-and-by. Work away night and day, and you will have no time for retrospective reveries, which are the seed-bed of melancholy. I worked all day yesterday . . . and, every time I began to dream of past delights, I pushed on vigorously at my study, and looked with joy into the grand horizon of an eternal future. I believe it to be the true maxim for attaining happiness, to work hard at all times and at all seasons, for as work increaseth in like proportion doth melancholy diminish. I have been following out this philosophy since six o'clock this morning, and the consequence is that I shall have some time over this evening for revising the *Prisoner of Mont St. Michel*. The world is a laboratory, sir, and by no means a pleasure-garden. The true pleasure is that of the workman who sees his work growing up under his hands ; all other pleasures are counterfeit.

“This letter, you will perceive, is enclosed in



*The Lady of La Garaye*,<sup>1</sup> a beautiful poem, full of exquisite thoughts, simply, gracefully, and unaffectedly expressed, and the moral it evolves is sublimity itself. . . .—Yours, dear old G\*\*,—NED.”

LETTER LXXVII. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T*——, August 4, 1863. I have been touching up the *Prisoner*, &c., since I last wrote; . . . and I am going to the mountains with J\*\*\* and S. D\*\*, there to spend the day, reading Cousin, and casting flies. . . . But *The Prisoner* won’t suffer much by the holiday, as I’ll revisit him to-night. I think on the whole, I am justified in the fishing enterprise. Finally, every day brings us nearer to each other, old boy, and nearer to Heaven too. With which solacing reflection I conclude.—Yours, NED.”

LETTER LXXVIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T*——, August 5, 1863. . . . I was out fishing and rowing on mountain-lakes, bleak, weird, sad, all yesterday, and did n’t get up this morning till 8½; so that I have to read very hard all day to make up for lost time. . . . I read a good deal of *Les Derniers Bretons*<sup>2</sup> on the mountains yesterday. I have rather a serious intention of writing a companion-poem to the *Prisoner of Mont St. Michel*, in every respect its contrast, calm, soft, and peaceful, and written in alternate decasyllables, or else in good round ringing heroics, just to show that I am not

<sup>1</sup> By the Hon. Mrs. Norton.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Of Émile Souvestre.—ED.

altogether a sensationist, and also to prove the superiority of a love whose ideal is sublimated friendship to a love whose ideal is moonshine. . . —Yours, in disgust with myself, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

The next letter is one in acknowledgment of a note from his friend Mr. C\*\*\*\*\*, written from Clifden, in Galway.

LETTER LXXIX. (*To G. A. C.*)—"T——, *Pitchy Abyss of Malebolge.* (*See Dante's 'Inferno.'*) August 6, 1863.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—Many thanks for your letter from Clifden, which, although it was laconic indeed, was nevertheless most welcome, proving as it did that our ideal of friendship is nearer to its consummation than it was this time three years. Your letter to G\*\*\*\*\*, which was not quite so condensed in style, had previously proved to me that you were enjoying yourself, which (mark the logical filiation of ideas!) is more than I am. My life may be epitomized thus—ethics, breakfast, Homer, dinner, science, tea, *The Prisoner of Mont Saint Michel*, and troubled sleep, all permeated by a delicious haze of tobacco-smoke. . . . —Ever yours, E. J. ARMSTRONG."

LETTER LXXX. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, August 7, 1863.—My dear G\*\*,—I will adopt both your suggestions, which are admirable. I am just going to translate into exquisite lyrical verse (!)

a gorgeous-gloomy Breton Sône, which I have found in *Les Derniers Bretons*. It will do splendidly to insert in the poem, as a *written* account of the hero's life, supposed to have been heard by him just on the eve of the harbour-scene; and it will heighten the effect of the catastrophe . . . I will send you the Sône when it is finished . . . . Look you, I *must* have the poem completed by the 1st October. I have only revised 400 lines yet. I have described the Fire pretty well, I think.

"I find it hard enough to do all I have to do in the twenty-four hours. Between ethics and classics and science and grinding, there is not much time over for poetry. Please write to encourage me in proceeding with the poem, as I am very lazy in the evenings. . . .—Yours, *de tout mon cœur*, NED."

LETTER LXXXI. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, August 8, 1863. . . . I send you my translation of the Sône, almost word for word from M. Souvestre's French. It is rather rough, but I think that is a recommendation in its favour as a correct rendering of the Breton feeling and language. . . [*Here follows the translation of Sône as it appears in "The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael."*<sup>1</sup>—ED.] . . . What do you think of it? Too rough? I would hope not; it is such a literal translation. *Cependant* . . . I must now go to science, so good-bye, and excuse *pauca verba*.—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

<sup>1</sup> See "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 218.—ED.

His next letter paints in distinct colours a gloomy experience of mental suffering which no agreeable surroundings had been powerful enough to prevent.

LETTER LXXXII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"T—, August 9, 1863. . . . I can perfectly understand the feeling of pain which marred your admiration of Connemara. When the soul possesses within it the elements of gloom, it craves for warmth and brightness without, and it almost shudders at the contemplation of the severer forms of Nature. Such, at least, is the way with me. Last night was rough and stormy, and a longing came upon me to go out into the solitude of the mountains and watch the sunset. So I left my studies, and passed out through the plantation of fir behind the house, and climbed to the top of a bleak desolate mountain which rises suddenly at the back of the grounds. I lay down and watched. The place where I have thought and suffered for a year lay beneath me, awfully weird and solitary, with its border of dark pines and larches. Besides this there was nothing to look at except barren mountains, brown with heath and turf, and, above, leaden clouds ; nothing to listen to but the sad wailing of the wind. I lay there, watching and listening, till the sun went down, and I could bear it no longer. . . . Scenery affects me as climate affects the plants and flowers. I do n't believe Horace when he says he could sing of his *dulce loquentem Lalagen* under the chariot of the

sun or in the land of the clouds, &c. . . .—Yours very sincerely, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

In this last letter a controversy is renewed on the morality of the New Testament and the inspiration of the Old, which he kept up during the remainder of his residence in the North of Ireland, and in which his three principal friends took active part. As his letters are often but commentaries upon, or discussions of, the postulates and arguments of these friends, and would require the printing of their letters also to render them intelligible, I give but an extract from the former here and there.

LETTER LXXXIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T*——, *August* 10, 1863. . . . Glad you like the *Sône*. . . . I have just finished a very long letter to C\*\*\*\*\*—so long, in fact, that it has completely exhausted my brains, which I must now refresh with a rubber at science with \*\*\*\*. O me, won’t it be a glorious thing when you and I meet next, with the full assurance that we are to part no more for three years to come? . . . I am looking forward with joy to the final termination of my pilgrimage.—NED.”

LETTER LXXXIV. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T*——, *August* 11, 1863. . . . Tell F\*\*\*\*\* that I am much obliged to him for his letter, which has cleared up a most important question. It is a very great satisfaction to be able to rely upon the honesty of the old translators, if we cannot always rely upon their scholarship. . . .

“ I am going to write now to S\*\*\*\*, to ask him to find out from Jannin or Langlois or Miss Le H\*\*\*\*, or any one he thinks can tell him, whether or not criminals condemned for capital offences are ever confined in the Mont. I hope they are. It is quite in the Irish style of doing things to write your story first and then take chance for the possibilities.—Yours, NED.”

The following is his defence of his thesis that our current notions of morality could not have been arrived at by a purely inductive process, and that till the historical evidences of Christianity are overthrown the only standard by which the morality of the Bible is to be judged is the moral code of the Bible itself; constituting a portion of his contribution to the controversial *mêlée*, for which the antepenultimate letter was the signal :—

LETTER LXXXV. (*To \*\*\*\*.*)—“ *T—, August 12, 1863. . . .* The reason may teach us that certain courses of action will produce good or evil consequences to ourselves and to others. For example : drunkenness and debauchery will ruin a man’s constitution and render him unfit for the performance of his social duties. If a man commit a murder, he knows that he will thereby contribute to produce an abnormal condition of society, and will render himself amenable to the laws of his country. This is the result of pure reason ; but I say that the reason can go no further than this. Do away

with revelation, and the reason by itself will never suggest or discover moral obligations. The morality discoverable by reason is on a par with the morality of the lower animals ; that is to say, it is not morality at all, but only a consciousness (differently developed in the various degrees of intelligence) that certain actions will produce good, *i. e.*, pleasure, while other actions will produce evil, *i. e.*, pain. Now, I ask, is this what we mean by the word Morality? Assuredly not. For, take an example of what is in Christian countries universally admitted to be immoral, viz., the feeling of envy, or the hatred of our enemies. The reason will tell us that these feelings, provided they be not abortive, will excite men to honourable action, and result in an incalculable amount of good to the individual who is their subject. What, then, is immoral in these passions? They are not, in the majority of cases, contrary to pure reason. Wherein consists their immorality? Certainly not in their disagreement with the suggestions of the conscience, for the conscience is the worst possible standard of actions or passions, varying as it does in different individuals, and in the same individual at different periods. Wherein, then, I repeat, does the immorality of these feelings consist? In this, that they are evil in the sight of the Supreme Being—a discovery which we could never have made by all the efforts of the unassisted reason. Herein lies the

essential difference between the morality of the Christian, on the one hand, and, on the other, the rational conduct of the heathen, and that which we call instinct in the inferior creation, which is in reality but a limited process of reasoning. An action may be good or evil (*i.e.* productive of pleasure or pain) in relation to the reason; but it can only be moral or immoral in relation to the Deity. . . If you destroy the evidences of Revelation, its morality will remain questionable, although it does not follow that it must perish likewise. But, to turn morality into an evidential weapon against Revelation, it will be necessary, first, to destroy all other evidences, and then, to prove that the morality of Revelation is inconsistent with itself—Ever yours affectionately, E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

In the midst of these discussions, which he carried on simultaneously, as I have said, with three correspondents, he was still revising *The Prisoner*, and still dreaming back upon the past :—

LETTER LXXXVI. (*To G. F. A.*)—“ *T*——, *August* 14, 1863. . . I had a dream last night worth a tour in Switzerland. I was in Vire, in Normandy, and you were in Dublin. The hurry and bustle of the travelling had given me no time to wish you were with me, and I was quite content to be alone and at quiet. I left the hotel in the evening, and walked down one of the valleys, which, however, turned northwards instead of in a southerly direc-



tion. I recognized a number of minute objects which I had long forgotten, steeples in the distant plain, and dim outlines of hills, which I remember well now. But all of a sudden the further side of the valley became more abrupt and precipitous than you will find it in Normandy, and, as I advanced, it became a wall of fluted quartz, a thousand feet in height, surmounted by the dream-like appearance of two magnificent cathedral-towers, like those of Notre Dame in their exquisite carvings and mouldings, but machicolated and perforated, and in their outline resembling more closely the stately towers of Westminster. The birds sang audibly around me, and I saw them and noted them. Then came a low, melodious, gushing sound like a mountain-torrent. I turned, and saw that my side of the valley was even more beautiful than the other, being wooded with all manner of trees to the summit, and cut from the cope to the base by a gorgeous waterfall, which fell musically, and not with a crash and a roar of thunder, as mundane waterfalls. And lo, the foam came oozing out over the road! I passed through it to the other side, and then—most vivid, most intoxicating sound!—the veritable crack-pot melody of the Norman bells, idealized into the sublimity of celestial sphere-harmony—ding, dang, dong, ding, dang, dong, &c., &c., &c. Whereat, a gush of sorrow filled my soul, and I wished intensely that you were with me. I resolved to go back

to the hotel at once and write you a description of what I saw. But, when I turned, behold the whole road was swamped by the overflow of the fall ! And therewithal, of course, I awoke. . .

“ I am very eager for \*\*\*\*\*’s reply, but it has not come yet. I have been reading . . . in anticipation of a sharp encounter of intellects. . .

“ I intend to devote the whole of this evening to *Mt. St. Michel*. I sincerely hope I may make a good thing out of it. I read it through, the other day, on the mountains, and came to the conclusion that it is well worth elaborating. Oh ! that I had nothing else to do ! ...—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

On the 17th he wrote a letter of great length, discussing many points of controversy, and from this I extract a passage which serves as a corollary to his letter of the 12th :—

LETTER LXXXVII. (*To \*\*\*\*.*)—“*T—, Aug. 17, 1863.* . . . I still believe that all notions of right and wrong attainable by reason resolve themselves into pleasure and pain. . . ‘If you want,’ says Cousin, ‘a manifest proof that virtue is not founded upon the personal interest of him who practises it, take the example of a generous man whose virtue proves his ruin instead of being an advantage to him ; and, to prevent all idea of calculation, suppose a man who sacrifices his life for truth ; who dies upon the scaffold, in the flower of his age, for the

cause of justice. Here there is no future, no chance of advantage, *at least in this world*, and, of course, no calculation, no possible self-interest.' The words I have interlined beg the whole question; so the examples are worthless. . . . Plato identifies virtue with utility; and where he acknowledges the highest virtue, Piety, he refers directly to the Greek religion, which, like all other heathen religions, is based upon the principle of self-interest. You will see the former reiterated in the *Apology*. Or take the memorable passage in the *Protagoras*, where the truly courageous man is declared to be he who knows what is dangerous and what is safe; and the coward, he who runs from danger, seeking something which is comparatively good; and if his conduct is vicious, it is because his judgment is wrong. There is a passage, indeed, in the *Gorgias*, where Socrates argues that pleasure and good are different; but the arguments he employs prove that he had no strong conviction on the subject, and that his conception of right and wrong was widely different from ours. 'To thirst is a pain, and to drink is a pleasure; therefore, to be thirsty and to drink is both a pain and a pleasure. But the same act cannot be both good and evil, &c.'—a contemptible quibble, intended to entrap his adversary, Callicles, into an admission involving the question in dispute. Again, in the *Philebus*, he argues against the sophistical dogma that pleasure is τὸ ἀγαθόν; but, if he

does so, he brings his dialogue to the puerile conclusion that the First Good is Measure; the Second, Proportion; the Third, Reason and Insight; the Fourth, Knowledge and Art; and the Fifth, Pleasure. But you will observe that I never said that Pleasure and Good were identical; my position was, that the Good discoverable by reason is only the antecedent of which Pleasure is the consequent.

“The examples of virtue among the ancients I refer to their religion or to their ambition, in either of which cases they must be attributed to self-interest. The essential difference between the morality inculcated in the Bible and the virtue practised by the ancients is this, that the former is declared to be right because God approves of it. Now, what about the virtue of the infidel? Why is it right? Destroy your belief in all revelation, and let me ask you what is wrong in a falsehood or in the hatred of your enemies? You will say that your conscience tells you what is right and what is wrong. Yes—if you possess some standard to apply it to. Otherwise, the conscience is but a development of the reason, a thing which does not exist in infants, or in irrational men, as your experience will inform you. The madman is he whose reason has perished—what conscience has the madman? Therefore the virtue of the infidel and the virtue of the ancients must finally resolve

themselves into a rational calculation of pleasure to be attained or of pain to be avoided.

“I say, then, that Lucretia was chaste, not because she knew that chastity was right in the sense of Christian morality, but because she loved her husband, or because she was ambitious of being considered a monument of chastity, or because she had previously calculated that chastity was productive of happiness and this calculation became her ruling principle. If you attribute this to conscience, how will you account for the fact that Socrates himself practised a vice so beastly that I loathe to name it, and that this abominable vice passed without censure among the greatest philosophers of antiquity? The patriotism of Regulus, Curius, Fabricius, and Curtius, may be attributed either to a natural love for the interests of their country, so strong that bodily suffering, ay, death itself, was to them less painful than to see their country ruined, or else, if you like, to ambition. You cannot account for it by the same moral law as the Bible teaches. . . . .

“. . . . To make amends for this tedious discussion, I will tell you at once that I cannot see how the science, history, and chronology of the Old Testament are to stand against the assaults of criticism. But here let me entreat you to be cautious. I have been careful to insist upon my theory of morality, not only because I believe it

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to be true, but because I believe it ought to be true. I cannot conceive of God as annulling the end of a revelation by allowing what is *absolutely wrong* to be interwoven with it. I know not to what conclusions we may be led, if we once accept this. But I can easily conceive falsehood to be mixed up with a *history* which neither claimed inspiration nor was inspired. Let us pause awhile, and reflect. . . .—Ever yours sincerely,  
E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

The same day he wrote another letter, announcing the answer to his inquiries about the class of prisoners confined at Mont Saint-Michel, and stating with greater emphasis his doubts of the infallibility of the Old Testament.

LETTER LXXXVIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T*—, August 17, 1863. . . . I got likewise yestermorn a fine cake of regal tobacco, with a letter from S. S., enclosing a French note from Jannin, who consulted a French gentleman who lives beside the Mont. He says, ‘*Je crois qu’on n’y a jamais envoyé de condamnés à la peine de mort.*’ However, that makes no difference, as I can state in the preface that the whole story is a fiction.

“ . . . I believe the science, history, and chronology of the Old Testament not only fallible but full of fallacies. I do not clearly see the conclusions to which this admission will bind me, but I cannot blink it . . . .—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

One of his friends, at this moment writing despairfully of himself, called forth the following remonstrance and encouragement:—

LETTER LXXXIX. (*To 'P. Q., Esq.'*)—"T——, August 18, 1863.—My dear old boy,—Enclosed herein is a letter of introduction to a particular friend of mine, one whose existence I believe you have never suspected, though, I give you my word for it, this was no fault of mine. I have known him from my early boyhood, and I think the time is come when you should know him also. I am sure you will like him when you come to know him, but he is one of those whom you must know ere he will seem worthy of your acquaintance. All I ask you to do is to cultivate him sedulously, and, take my word for it, you will be able to make anything of him. To give you some idea of his character, let me ask your perusal of an extract from the last letter I received from him; to which extract, however, I premise that I have already subscribed my unqualified opinion in a pencilled note, reading somewhat thus—'Humbug!'

" 'It seems to me,' writes this excellent friend of mine, 'that I am so constructed that my place should be altogether with the real, and not at all with the ideal, that I should deal with the substantial things of this world, and not with the abstract realities of that other which is around, about, within this, like the spirit animating the body. I recognize

the presence of that spirit, I bow awe-stricken before its awful majesty, I perceive its transcendent superiority, I feel that without it the mere corporeal frame would be dull, inanimate, colourless. Still let me wave the locks, and tint the cheek, and teach the dress to fall in suggestive fold on fold, while you and others contemplate in finer reverie the "very pulse of the machine," holding commune with loftier realities.'

"Now, the beauty of this man (I assume that you do n't know anything whatever about him) is, that he has got into a fatal habit—very amusing to others, no doubt—of raving against his fancied materialism in the most immaterial idealizations of philosophy, deploring and bemoaning his want of poetical insight in the highest flights of poetic prose.

"Instead of enclosing a letter of introduction as I intended, I will give you his name and ask you to give him the present letter to read over with care and circumspection. He is called 'P. Q.,' but you do n't know him by that name, and never did, as it seems to me; although his friends know him by it very well. So I must needs furnish you with another name by which to recognize him. As the highest favour you can bestow upon me, I beg you to make his acquaintance, and I predict with confidence that you will come to have the same opinion of him that I have. Allow me, then, to introduce Mr. 'P. Q.' to my esteemed and valued friend, *Himself*.—Ever yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."



In his letter of the 17th he had expressed his revived misgivings on the subject of the Old Testament Scriptures ; and stated that he did not yet see plainly to what conclusion the admission of their fallibility and fallaciousness would lead. In his next letter he presents the alternative to himself and his correspondent in still clearer terms :—

LETTER XC. (*To \*\*\*\*\*.*)—" *August 19, 1863.*  
. . . I wish in the present letter to place clearly before me the consequences of rejecting the science, history, and chronology of the Old Testament, as such. I have not taken this final step as yet ; I believe the morality of the book unassailable except through the utter demolition of the New Testament evidences ; I shall leave the former question still under consideration, without deciding one way or the other till I have examined it with the utmost minuteness. But I believe my judgment will be less liable to be fettered by prejudice, if I learn to contemplate the ultimate consequences without flinching . . ." [*Here follows a host of instances of Christ's adoption of the Old Testament narrative, as one who believed it to be true at least in many particulars.—ED.*]

" . . . . Now, I have accepted the divinity of Christ on historical evidence. I believe, therefore, that the words of Christ are strictly true. I believe also, on the same historical evidence, that the record of His words is on the whole one of the most

faithful records in the world. If I read the words I have quoted, or heard them quoted by Christ Himself, for the first time, I confess I should have inferred from them not only a sanction of the Old Testament so far as regards what it contains of things pertaining to God, but a general intimation of its truth, as being the word of God. But if, on examining the Old Testament by the lamp of modern criticism, I find it to contain certain statements which seem not to be borne out by fact? I cannot disbelieve the words of Christ without disbelieving His divinity, in order to which I must destroy every atom of the historical evidence for the New Testament. There remains, then, but one alternative. I must closely and without prejudice examine the difficulties which present themselves, and, if these prove insurmountable, I must take my choice between a greater and a smaller difficulty—viz., I must balance the probabilities nicely, whether it is more conformable with reason to believe certain portions of the Old Testament in opposition to the results of criticism, or to believe that the words of Christ did not sanction their truth. Now, suppose I have rejected the former condition, I believe most unhesitatingly that the latter contains the greater difficulty. Let us not blink the facts of the case. Is it more rational to believe that science is wrong, that history is deceptive, that philosophy is fallacious, or to believe that Christ, God Himself,

would have countenanced a lie ; and not only a lie, but a lie ascribed to God Himself, and contained in a volume to which God Himself in the person of Christ directly and repeatedly appeals as His own word, His revelation, His law, not one jot or tittle of which shall ever fail ?

“ Now, even suppose the acceptation of the scientific accuracy of the Old Testament be a great difficulty, its rejection involves a greater still. For myself, therefore, I tell you candidly that, although I am ready to admit the possibility, even the probability, of its inconsistency with the deductions of science, I will reject science, or else reject the divinity of Christ and believe in the infallibility of science. . . . I rely on reason alone to lead me to the truth ; but when I find reason suggesting two difficulties infinitely disproportioned in magnitude, I believe it to be the most rational course to accept the smaller of the two. . . .—Yours very sincerely,  
EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER XCI. (*To G. F. A.*)—“ *T*——, *Aug. 20th. Grouse-shooting commences.*—My dear G\*\*\*,— . . The discussion has put me very much out of my way and interfered sadly with my poem and my studies, but I am persuaded nothing better could have happened. . . . I was talking to D\*\*\*\* on the subject last night. He believes in the pre-Adamite antiquity of man, but holds that it does n’t affect Revelation. I did n’t press him for an explan-

ation, as I saw plainly that he was n't at all clear about it. . .—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

"I conclude," he had written on the same day to his principal disputant, "confident that we shall yet arrive at the truth, and thankful to you for having forced me to the study of a subject I was too much in the habit of 'putting by' of late." . . "Now for study and poetry," he writes to another, on the 22nd, "which have suffered from nearly a week's neglect. '*Protinus i recto calle; redire nefas!*'" On the 24th he was able to announce—"I am working again at *The Prisoner*, and have revised as far as line 1800. I shall have completed the first revisal in a few days. . . It may be ready for publication by Easter." And on the 25th he suspended the controversy, and announced his intentions in the following words:—

LETTER XCII. (*To \*\*\*\*.*)—"T——, Aug. 25, 1863. . . . The bastion, Immutable Morality, is not worth contending for. Surrender the fortress, Non-inspiration, and Morality must fall into the hands of the enemy. This magnificent attempt at a metaphor . . . means that if you grant the inspiration of the Old Testament, its morality follows by necessary inference. The immutability of morality is a purely metaphysical question.

"It is by no means my intention, however, to resign the subject of the evidences, though I am forced by circumstances to postpone it for awhile.

I will resume my study of the Hebrew language, most assuredly. This, with poetry, lectures on English Literature . . . and the College Historical Society, . . . will give me enough to do for the next twelve months.—I think the study of the Evidences as a preliminary absolutely necessary ; but I am sure it is unprofitable afterwards, unless it occupies a secondary place. To live comfortably and profitably in a house, it is not necessary to be always engaged in testing the strength of the walls and sounding the depth of the foundations. . . .

“ . . . I want to bring out my poem with a companion-poem, its contrast in every respect, before next summer. . . .

“ If I can, I will meet you at Belfast ; but I can promise nothing. Work is a glorious thing, only for the fever that it brings. These bodies of ours ! —Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

On the bearings of the Old Testament upon the evidences of Christ's divinity he was now content to suspend judgment, while he waited tranquilly for an opportunity of prosecuting his inquiries with better system and ampler resources. Having this object in view, on his return to College he attended lectures in Hebrew and in Divinity, with perhaps no very satisfactory results ; still retaining, with much consolation thence accruing, his belief in a beneficent infinite God, and in Jesus Christ as an emanation from that God, His human-hearted inter-

preter, the nearest approximation of manhood to the ideal of divine love, the intercessor between God and man ; and continuing to work out as far as possible the highest practical lessons of Christianity. But he ceased to probe and test his religious emotions, and to measure his spiritual growth. "I say, away with *consciousness in religion*," he had written ; "it is a monster sprung from human selfishness. . . . When you love, really and truly *love*, does not the wish to please absorb your faculties so completely that you have neither time nor room for the question 'Do I succeed?'" His views quietly developed ; he found a balance between extremes ; his confidence increased ; and the two fundamental doctrines which he henceforth cherished are well indicated by two of his later lyrics, one finding terse expression in the stanzas—

"Pry not too curiously within,  
Lest thou be deadened by disgust ;  
Thy soul is still a world of sin,  
But at the centre liveth trust.

"Let be. Despair not. Thou shalt see  
That world consumed, and where the feud  
Of fire with fuel roared, will be  
The glory of a world renewed ;"

and the other in the beautiful apostrophe in the poem *Despondency*—

“Look up, beloved, and say  
The worlds are living and not dead.  
Love infinite upholds them night and day,  
To infinite Pity wed.”

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“I want to live with my family,” he wrote to Mr. C\*\*\*\*\*, “for a while longer, before being separated from them perhaps for ever.” There were now but a few weeks more to spend among the scenes in which he wrote, and then he was to return finally to his old associates, and take part for a time in the busy intellectual life of his University; and he was full of good spirits, and life, and joyous expectation. The weather being fair, and the autumn moon large and lustrous, he planned a series of night-walks among the mountains, which he accomplished, sometimes alone, and sometimes with one or two active companions—dressing himself in the rudest attire, perhaps to avoid attracting attention and exciting curiosity among the country-people, and—it may be added—the police; perhaps only for the humour of the thing, and to recall his droll experiences in France.

LETTER XCIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T—*, September 1, 1863. . . . Last night, starting with J\*\*\* and a fine black Newfoundland dog, *en* ‘frightful rowdy,’ at 8½, I walked by the light of the moon, through the most desolate part of the mountains, to a remote town called C——gue, where we had never been before. We tried to lose our way, and succeeded.

At about ten miles from T——, we came upon a magnificent collection of Druidical remains, extending the length of three good-sized fields. We examined them by moonlight, and lit our pipes, and smoked through them. We then took a turn through a wild, barren road on the top of a wide tract of mountain, and walked on and on, till it was near 1 o'clock this morning, when we took a turn to the right, through moor and bog—hearing the pewit whistle and the moor-cock challenge—and at about 3 o'clock we found ourselves on the top of a mountain looking down over the [house]. Thither wending, there that night we bode, and slept till 12 o'clock to-day. . . . Oh! what glorious dreams were mine!—Ever yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER XCIV. (*To G. F. A.*)—“T——, *September 5, 1863.* . . . I have discontinued my mad moonlight walks, but not till after I have had a glorious one, which I shall attempt briefly to describe.

“On Thursday night, at 8½ P.M., J\*\*\* and I and F. D. set out on a trial of physical endurance, and walked through the most desolate part of the mountains to the foot of Slieve Gullion, where we arrived at 11 o'clock. We then resolved to go on to Cookstown, not knowing the distance or the way, and not caring a jot about either. The face of the country here gradually changed, and at last the road for miles and miles was overshadowed by



magnificent trees, and forests were upon this side and upon that. At 2 o'clock on Friday morning we got into Cookstown—a long street, with fine trees at both sides of it—and tried to knock up the hotel people, and get a drink. They would n't get up, so we pulled the rope off the night-bell, and walked off. However, we succeeded in rousing the keeper of a wine-store, and there we quaffed porter and did eat bread, 'resting weary limbs' on forms of hard-grained oak. Then we went on to very near the shores of Lough Neagh, and turned homeward by another way. We got to P—— at 6½, and came back to T—— by the 7 train; where, throwing ourselves upon our respective beds, we slept through glorious dreams till 1 o'clock in the day. It was a splendid feat altogether; we walked nearly thirty miles in the moonlight. You and I must see Wicklow under similar circumstances. . . . I wish you had been with us, to see the appearance we presented at the first blush of the dawn—corduroy breeches, tarpaulin hats, blue worsted stockings, and awfully rowdy coats. — Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

LETTER XCV. (*To G. F. A.*)—"T——, *September 6, 1863.* . . I wish the imprisonment was all over, for indeed I'm very sick of it. . . . Do you know I almost loathe intellectual work now? I should be the better for a tour on the Continent in the capacity of a French Horn! . .

“I believe that suffering is the absolute condition of poetry. The latter cannot exist without the former. And, in truth, this life is a cheat, a painted harlot, whose smiles are false and her breath the poison of adders. So it's all right, I suppose: and, if pain is the natural consequence of vice, it is certainly in this life the handmaid of virtue. . . — Yours, E. J. ARMSTRONG.”

One of the aspirations of this letter finds a parallel in a doggerel epistle, without date, which may take its place better here perhaps than elsewhere:—

LETTER XCVI. (*To G. F. A.*)—

“Listen, mon cher, to this rampant roar!  
 O, for a week on the Breton shore!  
 I fear, I fear 't is a *castle in Spain*,  
 But the thought of not going fills me with pain.  
 O, for a drive in a voiture old,  
 With as much good weed as our pouches could hold,  
 While the zephyrs the dust on the traces would fan  
 Of the clattering rattle-trap shanderadan,  
 And the salt sea-breeze in our nostrils blow,  
 And the tide o'er the quicksands ebb and flow,  
 And the forest resound with the sparrow and crow!  
 I wish to the Old Boy, we could go!  
 But something within me whispers—No!  
 But if the event should turn out so,  
 A bushy and barbarous beard I'd grow,  
 And send my old razor and strop to Jim Crow;  
 And you and I could set up a show,  
 You'd be the monkey and I'd be the man . .  
 (While the zephyrs the dust on our breeches 'd fan!)  
 . . And when even would blush in the violet sky,

Beside the obstreperous beach we'd lie,  
Watching the clouds and the foam go by,  
And wishing to heaven we were able to fly?  
.. What could be more delightful than this? . . .  
And to think it depends on the sense and the knowledge  
Of those hoary old muffs of Trinity College! . .  
[E. J. A.]”

LETTER XCVII. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*September 7, 1863.* . . . Now, sir, I am stark mad about poetry. Stark mad. If I don't accomplish my purpose, I shall consider that I have lived in vain. By all that's romantic and sentimental and tom-foolish and moonshiny, I will, shall, and must have my first volume in the hands of the publishers before Easter. I'll not stand any procrastination. . . My hair is already turning grey—and red; and, if I don't publish before another six months, the cherished aim of six years will have vanished into thin air. The best years of my youth have been consumed in poetic thought and poetic labour, and the fever of ambition preys upon my vitals with redoubled energy, nor will it be extinguished till I have gained the second object of my existence. . .—EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER XCVIII. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T—, September 9, 1863.* . . . If K\*\*\*\*\* tells me that I am no poet, but only an inflated young gentleman of sensibility, I shall take his word for it, and thank him to the last day of my life. . . . I shall no longer strive to catch a splendid bubble. I shall try to

conquer my ambition, which feeds and lives upon the gratification of my poetical inclinations, and *sub pondere crescit*. . . God save me from the fate of a poetaster, which is vanity personified !—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

LETTER XCIX. (*To G. A. C.*)—“*T*——, *September 9, 1863*. . . If you are too busy to write to me, that is no reason why I should not write to you. I dreamt of you with horrible vividness last night. You were a clergyman, prosperous, married, and happy in the midst of many congenial duties. You knelt down to pray, and I followed your example, but a vague sense of some tremendous misfortune weighed upon me and prevented me from joining you. You will say that this may be interpreted thus—indigestion, and a slight touch of jealousy, perhaps. However that may be, the dream gave rise to a train of painful thoughts which I cannot retrace, but of which this letter is the result.

“A constant habit of poetical thought or reverie without any tangible result, such as a neatly-bound volume or popular applause, is beginning to tell seriously upon my spirits and upon my judgment. I am lost in a labyrinth of fancies and dreams, and, in spite of all my struggles, I am becoming virtually a sceptic in all matters which do not fall within the province of poetry. I am sure you do n’t understand me ; and there is no use in trying to describe a disease which is completely subjective, and for

which the sufferer must be his own doctor. . . . —  
Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

The next letter alludes to an offer which he made to his excellent friend Mr. “P. Q.,” to prepare him for all his University examinations, if he would pluck up heart and enter College.

LETTER C. (*To G. F. A.*)—“*T—, September 19, 1863.* . . . I suppose “P. Q.” has told you that I intend to give him a splendid education for ninepence. I will give him a certain portion of Greek, Latin, English Literature, History, and Ethics and Logics to make up every week, and I will have him at Kingstown every Saturday morning by the 7 train, grind him, give him his breakfast, and either pack him off, or go with him, to Dublin. . . .

“I wish I was in Kingstown; but, when I open my Diary to-morrow, to make my usual diurnal entry, behold, Thursday-week will stare me in the face with a pleasant smile, which will grow more and more radiant till that blessed morn arrives, when the smile will be transformed into a delightful grin, and I shall ‘grow fantastically merry’ (*Maud*), but for the torture of travelling once again over that detestable and most unpicturesque Northern Railway Line!—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

One can imagine the triumphant pleasure with which he wrote his next missive, announcing the certain accomplishment of all he had promised his friend to do:—

LETTER CI. (*To G. A. C.*)—"T——, *September 23, 1863.*—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I am hard at work copying out the poem for your perusal, and, if you will meet me at the Amiens-St. Terminus on Thursday, the 1st prox., at 6½ o'clock, P.M., you will enable me to fulfil an important item in my bargain, by giving it to you on the appointed day. I am dissatisfied with it *ad nauseam*. If you disapprove it, there will be so much disgust removed from my conscience, and I shall be very grateful to you for the relief. Otherwise the *Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael* is a Frankenstein which I cannot conjure.—Yours, &c., E. J. ARMSTRONG."

In his next letter, he announced his final determination with regard to the promised companion poem :—

LETTER CII. (*To \*\*\*\*\**)—"T——, *September 25, 1863.* . . . Instead of writing a new poem, I have determined to elaborate *Ovoca*, for a companion-poem to *The Prisoner*. It will be far better than to attempt to write a new one, and it will form a good introduction to our *Stories of Wicklow*. The plot is [good], and the sorrow is for the most part subdued and beautiful, forming a decided contrast to the incoherent ravings of our poor friend the Prisoner. . . . The volume *must* be before the public by Easter.—Yours, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

On the 30th of September he arrived in Dublin, with *The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael* ready

in his hand to present to his friend. He had prefixed to it its "Dedicatory Stanzas," acknowledging his obligations to the generous donor of the plot; and now he tendered him the whole manuscript. It was received with surprise and gratification, and read with increasing admiration; and a letter of praise, conceived in the same brotherly and generous spirit which had prompted the relinquishment of the story, soon afterwards reached the author in Kingstown. Armstrong was so habitually disposed to depreciate everything he did, that he had come already to regard the poem as a failure; and the admiration with which it was hailed was, as his acknowledgment implies, an unexpected boon:—

LETTER CIII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Kingstown, October 6, 1863.—My dear C\*\*\*\*\*,—I am surprised and delighted beyond measure by the terms in which you have belauded my poem. You have bestowed upon it the very highest compliment which one man could bestow upon the work of another. To approach your ideal was indeed the height of my aspirations. To be told that I have really surpassed it would make me 'fantastically merry,' were it not for the consciousness that I have *not* realized my own ideal, or anything like it.

"However, I will labour to improve what I have done, and, availing myself gratefully of your suggestions, I confidently hope to win . . . , perhaps, hereafter, the applause of the public.

“My opinion of the poem is, that the events narrated in the first two days are devoid of interest and there are too many instances of stage-effect visible throughout the entire work. But these defects may easily be remedied. . . —Yours very sincerely, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

His friends had never for a moment doubted the richness, breadth, and genuineness of his poetic gift; and indeed he himself had seldom had any real misgivings about his natural vocation; but latterly, living apart so much from critical intellects, he had grown perhaps somewhat morbidly distrustful of himself, as a man under such circumstances will; and now that he was back again among men of like tastes with his own, the chorus of laudation with which his works were received was cheering and invigorating. He never lost confidence in himself again—that is to say, he never troubled himself any more about the extent of his intellectual resources than he had determined to do about the degrees of his spiritual progress, but went steadily and perpetually ahead, thinking, writing, working joyously; and as everybody was convinced of his power, nothing arose to awaken in himself any suspicions concerning it. So closed a fertile season of his life, and opened a more fertile still.



CHAPTER XVII. 1863, ÆT. 22—.

Residence in Trinity College, Dublin.—Speeches.—More Poems.—Essay on the “Character of Mephistopheles.”—The late Dr. James Henry: “The Wanderers.”—New and Congenial Associates.—Life in Trinity College, Dublin.—A Busy Intellectual Period.—Speech on Trades’ Unions.—Liking for the Philosophical Society; Essays and Discussions therein; elected its President.—Professor G. L. Craik on “The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael.”—Growing Reputation.—Long Vacation.—“*Jamque Vale!*”

**T**OWARDS the end of October he took up his abode in chambers in Trinity College, thus commencing a residence which lasted for more than a year—an agreeable change in his mode of life, as it brought him immediately into the society of the best scholars and most advanced thinkers among the younger men of the University.

Setting himself at once to carry out his educational programme, he commenced attendance on lectures in Hebrew, and in English Literature, and, later on, in Divinity; and spoke or read papers in the Historical and Philosophical Societies. In the Philosophical Society he made but one speech this year; and in doing so, somehow or another, lost heart, and sat down before he had said one quarter of what was on his mind to say. But the subject

was Mr. Tennyson's poems, which he was reluctant to criticise in a speech at all. In the Historical Society he was nominated for an early debate in the Session, and, as the question was one on which he felt strongly, he spoke well, and received almost the highest marks of the evening—a success not usual, I think, with a speaker at his *début* there; and he was on all hands warmly complimented. In the meantime he was recasting his poem *Oona*, and writing lyrical pieces, as the mood prompted, which was pretty frequently; and among the latter pieces, written before the end of the year, were *Mnemosyne*, *Despondency*, and *A Lament*.

Towards the close of December he was asked to read a paper before the Philosophical Society, and chose as his subject the *Character of Mephistopheles*,<sup>1</sup> the idea being suggested to him, as he states, by Mr. Masson's essay on *The Three Devils*; and the plan of the paper was struck out, one day, as he sat chatting with his friend Mr. B\*\*\*\*\*, by a little brooklet near the Military Road that runs across the Dublin Mountains between Killakee and Lough Bray. The paper is professedly merely a study and amplification of Mr. Masson's theory; but it is quite as much an expression of his own homage to Goethe's *Faust*, a poem, which, as has been said, he used to read over and over again with an ever-deepening insight.

<sup>1</sup> See "Essays and Sketches."—ED.

Thus, writing poems, delivering occasional orations, attending lectures, studying languages, witnessing operas or plays as opportunity permitted, taking long walks among his beloved mountains, visiting his home and seeing old faces from time to time, constantly enjoying that intellectual society for which he had so greatly longed, making new acquaintances every day, and finding sympathy, praise and encouragement on all sides, he closed the year 1863 as happily as in this cranky existence a man could well expect to bring any year to an end.

In the summer of 1876 died, near Dublin, at an advanced age, a remarkable man, the late Dr. James Henry. This gentleman's publicly expressed atheism ; his poems of variable merit ; his scholarship ; his long wanderings on foot, in company with his daughter, in many lands ; and that daughter's beautiful devotion to him ; had rendered him an object of interest to Armstrong, whose attention had first been attracted to him in 1859, in the Library of the Royal Dublin Society, where, even then a grey-headed man, he used to be seen sitting day after day engaged in his life-long researches. One day in this winter of 1863—one of those wild dry winter-days when the wind makes melancholy music in the leafless branches, and fancy is alternately gloomed and gladdened by flashes of sunshine and shadows of heavy cloud—Armstrong,

walking along one of the Wicklow roads, came suddenly upon the "old man and his daughter," reclining for rest under a gigantic elm. The bright cheerful face of the father, and the lady's sorrowful pale features, and the story of their lives, and the spot where they rested, and the wailing of the wind in the gaunt boughs above them, haunted his imagination during the remainder of his walk, and at last shaped themselves ere nightfall into that little lyric called *The Wanderers*<sup>1</sup> which excited admiration in the first edition of his poems; and which will now be read, I venture to hope, with renewed interest by those who remember the personages who suggested it.

"As iron sharpeneth iron," he had said, "so doth a man the countenance of his friend." Dearly he delighted in solitude, for in solitude he could reflect, and dream, and observe, undisturbed by prosaic suggestions; but his social instincts were strong; and his warm, affectionate nature, and his intellectual pursuit of truth and beauty, caused him to yearn, with an intensity perhaps rare, for thorough, unreserved, ideal friendship, consolidated by the bonds of common loyalty to truth and virtue, and by mutual confidence and respect. It was this craving which impelled him, in what barren persons might consider a "romantic" manner, to open his long-continued correspondence with Mr.

<sup>1</sup> See "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 38a.—ED.

C\*\*\*\*\* ; and to him, in one of his later letters, he had said, "I tell you candidly I despair of ever making another friend"—that is, a friend after his exalted conception of what a friend should be. But at College, notwithstanding this, he found several new and thoroughly congenial associates, and he was soon surrounded by a large circle of acquaintances who liked him and respected him ; who greeted every new display of his strength with their warmest applause ; and who formed high expectations of the work which he might accomplish in the future. And all this, to one whose career had been so grievously interrupted at its outset, and who had been compelled to spend so much of his time apart from youths of his own standing, was both gratifying and stimulating.

His chambers, in No. 29, were ample and commodious, and two friends were able to chum with him nearly all the time he occupied them. These rooms—invaded at times by some whose tastes and habits were the very converse of his own, but whose foibles, not without friendly interest, he gently tolerated—opened their doors to some of the best men of his College, most of whom are now distinguished in their several walks. But of a small inner circle of dear companions they were the constant rendezvous. There everything stronger than coffee was strictly forbidden to be drunk, and no greater luxury was approved than a harmless

“æsthetic pipe.” But *his* spirits and intellect required no artificial stimulants; and gay, and free, and noble was the intellectual intercourse there carried on; new poems, new essays were read; controversies and criticisms on all manner of themes were started and eagerly pursued; now a drama was gone through; now songs were sung in joyous chorus; till at last Armstrong would break into his wildest mirth and frolic—jokes, mimicry, irresistible fun would flow from his lips, with apparently no hope of cessation; the room would be turned upside down amid extravagant antics, while the mouths and bodies of his friends ached with laughter not to be subdued.

Late at night, when the gates had been long closed, and most of the students were either studying, roystering, or in blissful sleep, his delight was to wrap his huge cloak about him, and go out, and pace the quadrangles, or the arcade of the Library; alone, thinking; or with one companion in conversation, or in that “social silence” of which Coleridge writes, the true test of friendship, more eloquent than words. Suggestions manifold and various came to him in these night-walks—from the moonlight, as it silvered the Campanile and the older and more scabrous buildings; from the sounds of young voices from lofty chambers where the night was consumed in boisterous revelry, until a headlong rush would be heard on the stairs, and

a "flown" band would issue from the doors, and separate with discordant yells, each one seeking his bed as best he might ; from the noise, like the sea, of the multitudinous hurrying wheels in the streets of the city without, until even that would die gradually away ; from the sound (how much sweeter to the ear !) of the night-wind in the hawthorn-trees and the sycamores in the New Square ; from the segment of the starry heavens above his head ; or, on darker nights, from the fog, and the blurred and sickly moonlight, or the blackness of sailing clouds, or the gloom of the porticos and courts. And then some vivid fancy would perhaps strike him ; he would climb up hurriedly to his rooms again, and, seizing paper and pencil—always a little fragment of pencil not more than an inch in length, which he held between his finger and his thumb,—he would dash off a lyric, such as *Despondency*, or *A Lament*, or *The Blind Student* ; or a few pages of prose ; not pausing for word or thought till he would cry, "There!" ; read the composition aloud in his musical rich voice ; thrust the manuscript into his coat-pocket ; and then to bed. From which, all of a sudden—but this, though characteristic, was happily of less frequent occurrence—he might rise, perhaps, later on, with a "Hallo, there ! Are you awake?" ; and rush out to play pranks with his good-humoured elder chum in the next apartment ; to chuck him out of bed ; or endeavour, with the

aid of his younger chum, to toss him in his blankets ; or, as once, even to suspend him from the window, for a few dread moments, like the coffin of Mohammed, between the heavens and the earth. And then back to bed again, to lie awake, not unfrequently, revolving many schemes, or talking across to his sleepless neighbours in the other rooms, till the first streaks of dawn stole through the chinks of the shutters, and eyelids gradually closed.

His days still continued to be employed in attending several courses of lectures ; in writing essays ; in writing and revising poems ; in imparting instruction to others—for he persisted in engaging himself throughout the greater portion of the year in tutorial work ; in reading a wide range of literature in the Library ; in taking in and giving out knowledge and conceptions at every pore. During the advancing Session he spoke again several times in the Historical Society ; each time receiving high commendation from his fellow-members ; his best oration being, I think, one on 'Trades' Unions, in which he gave his sympathies heartily on the side of the working-man. On the occasion the audience was composed largely of strangers from the town, whose plaudits were loud, and whose remarks in leaving the Hall were good to hear. The result of his speaking in this Society was the award of the Society's First Certificate for Oratory at



the close of the Session; a prize which I believe was quite unsought and quite unexpected by himself; for he had no belief in his powers as a speaker. But he found the atmosphere of the Philosophical Society more congenial to his particular tastes. There the custom of opening discussions by the reading of written essays, gave him more scope for the exercise of a faculty of the possession of which he was more distinctly conscious; and he liked the sifting which questions sometimes received there, owing to the liberty members enjoyed of treating them from every point of view that might suggest itself. The Society numbered, also, among its members at that time some of the ablest men in the University.<sup>1</sup> It was therefore a delightful circle in which to spend an evening once a-week, and

<sup>1</sup> The minutes of the Society preserve, among names of graduates and undergraduates of eminent talents and attainments who read papers or took part in discussions, those of the following, most of whom were his own personal friends: —Dr. Shaw, F.T.C.D.; the late Mr. Ferrar, F.T.C.D., author of *Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin*; Dr. Robert Ball, now Astronomer Royal of Ireland; Dr. E. Dowden, now Professor of English Literature in the University; Rev. J. P. Mahaffy, F.T.C.D., author of *Social Life in Greece, &c.*; the late Mr. Richard Edgeworth, who united a keen love of science with the imagination of a poet; Mr. Francis Y. Edgeworth; Mr. Brougham Leech; Dr. J. Todhunter; Mr. Max. Cullinan, joint author of *Hesperidum Susurri*; and many others more or less known to collegiate, scientific, or literary fame.—ED.

Armstrong thoroughly enjoyed the wit-encounters and intellectual attrition, whether as an active disputant or a mere listener and silent observer. He read three essays during the Session, and all were recommended for the Society's prizes,—the best mark of favour which it was possible for the members to bestow upon them. And the Society testified its regard and respect still more distinctly by electing him its President ; this honour entailing the duty of opening the following Session with a public Address.

It had been his intention, as his letters announce, to publish *The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael* and *Ovoca* in the spring of this year. But he had a particular desire to submit the poems to the judgment of some perfectly unbiassed critic before risking a more general scrutiny. He believed his friends to be blinded by partiality and goodnature, and he frankly told them so. The present Bishop of Limerick (Dr. Graves), then Senior Lecturer, and, at the same time, I believe, Dr. Ingram, then Professor of English Literature in Trinity College, had offered him, most kindly, the advantage of their counsel and experience in any literary undertaking which he might have at heart ; but he feared that their criticism likewise would be too gentle and favourable for his satisfaction. Just at this time a fellow-student, who betrayed a strong liking for the poem and the poet, asked leave to carry *The*

*Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael* to the late Dr. G. L. Craik, the well-known historian of English Literature, the Professor of History and English Literature in Belfast College ; a critic of vigorous and uncompromising judgment, if not of the most delicate or subtlest perceptions ; and one likely in this case to speak with thorough impartiality. The proposition pleased Armstrong ; he copied out *The Prisoner*, and added some lyrical pieces, including the address *To Tranquillity*, *The Wanderers*, *Despondency*, *Mnemosyne*, *Blanche amid the Lilies* (from *Ovoca*), and others ; and he thought it worth while to defer the intended publication till the Professor's opinion should reach him. The delay entailed by this resolve proved greater than he had anticipated, for the critic's hands were at the moment unusually occupied ; but when, after a time, the judgment did arrive, it was almost as favourable as the warmest eulogiums of his most devoted friends. "This," wrote Professor Craik, "is undoubtedly a very remarkable piece of writing. There can be no question about the eloquence, the grace, the illustrative ingenuity and fancy . . . . There is so much passion and so much music, so much of general tenderness and sweetness, that I am inclined to think we have here something more akin to the precocity of Shelley and of Keats than to that of Macaulay, more of the genius which is distinctive of the poet than merely of that which belongs to the

orator . . . ;” and “some of the shorter pieces,” he added, “seem to me to have, at least in lines and stanzas, fully as much of the unmistakable soul of poetry as the long poem.”<sup>1</sup>

He had staked a good deal on the judgment of an impartial proficient; he had got one, and this was its complexion. Yet, instead of causing him to rush impetuously into print, the encouragement which he now received on every side rather made him content to rest a little longer in privacy, and prepare to stretch his wings for a wider and a loftier flight.

But now, when summer had arrived, and lectures and examinations were over, and the Societies had closed their Sessions, and he heard nothing but praises and congratulations from an ever-widening circle of acquaintances, he began to sigh again for the “merry green wood,” and the breath of the mountain-moorlands; and, resolving to start off for a walking-tour in Derbyshire with the companion of his French rambles, he took farewell of the University and its denizens in the following words—read amid laughter to a group of friends, and then crushed away, like many another snatch of verse,

<sup>1</sup> It was characteristic of Armstrong that, without making any mention of it, he had slipped in among these shorter pieces one by his old correspondent, which he himself esteemed very highly; and I think it gave him just as much pleasure to secure for his friend the critic’s laudatory words on that little poem as to read those so fervently commending his own.—ED.

into his coat-pocket, to be picked thence thereafter by these editorial hands :—

**" A FAREWELL.**

**" JAMQUE VALE.**

**" Farewell, cube and square and dusty college quadrangles !**

**Take the last dust of my shoe ;**

**Gladly I bid ye adieu !**

**Farewell, lustreless eyes and angular faces of Fellows !**

**Questions of fiddle-de-dee,**

**Reason in motley, vale !**

**Ad mea, decepti juvenes, præcepta venite !**

**Drink from the fountain-head ;**

**Let the dead bury their dead !**

**Come to the breeze of the sea and the heathery bloom of the  
headland ;**

**Hark, in the cool of the cave,**

**Musical swirls of the wave !**

**Hark, in the midsummer woods the cooing and trilling and  
purling !**

**Hark, in the summer-night air,**

**Laughter and songs of the fair !**

**Let us forget for awhile Sapiens Stultitia weighing**

**Questions of fiddle-de-dee—**

**Frigida verba, vale !"**

CHAPTER XVIII. 1864, *ÆT.* 22-23.

A Pedestrian Ramble.—The Peak Revisited.—A Beautiful Character.—Peveril Castle and Hope-Dale.—Strange Presentiments.—Great Physical Strength.—Miller's Dale and Cressbrook.—Ashford.—Bakewell.—Chatsworth.—Letter CIV.: *Focular Description of Derbyshire; of Alton Towers.*—Through the Vi' Gillies to Dovedale.—Letter CV.: "*Peveril of the Peak Hotel,*" Dovedale, and its inmates.—Depression and Forebodings of Fellow-Traveller.—A Curious Phenomenon.—Sunset from Thorpe Cloud.—"The Happy Valley."—Peaceful Recollections.

OFF across the sea, with their knapsacks, as of yore, the two travellers, rejoicing to find themselves reliving old times over again in blissful companionship, found themselves sailing, one morning in the June of 1864, in glad expectation of fair scenes and vigorous tramps among the mountains. Of Derbyshire Armstrong cherished agreeable reminiscences, and he longed to visit it once again, and explore it more thoroughly.

After passing through the Pottery-district of North Staffordshire—a hell upon earth which Armstrong subsequently described with some irony in his essay on Coleridge,<sup>1</sup>—the pedestrians marched eastward toward the Peak, and entered that region

<sup>1</sup> See "Essays and Sketches."—ED.

at its north-west corner. The scenery of North Staffordshire, bordering on Derbyshire—hills and dales and woods, and picturesque towns and villages—pleased him exceedingly ; for, much as he delighted in rough mountainlands, he loved too the softer beauties of the lowland English landscape, and enjoyed, as much as man could, the “harvest of a quiet eye.”

“One afternoon,” wrote his fellow-traveller, “while descending the eastern slope of one of the loftier mountains of the Peak, we came suddenly within sight of the little town of —, nestling in the valley below our feet ; and, as we lay down to rest and enjoy the prospect, he remained for a long time silent ; and at last turned to me and directed my eyes to a country mansion, with gardens and lawns, on the slope of one of the hills not far away, all girdled with a cincture of pinewoods and leafy plantations. And then he told how, in the summer of 1859, in that season of boyhood when his hopes were high and as yet had known but one shadow, he had wandered about the gardens there with the beautiful Miss S\*\*\*\*\*, whose home it was ; how her intellectual conversation, and graceful, gentle manners had fascinated him ; and how for months afterwards the fair image illumined his fancy ; and I have thought it possible to trace something of the bright nature which thus awakened his admiration and respect in his picture (com-

pleted this very year) of one of the two lovely female characters of *Ovoca*. . . .

“Pursuing our journey,” this narrative proceeds, “we found ourselves one day—having crossed the mountains, Heaven knows where—on the hill overhanging Peveril Castle, and looking across the beautiful valley of Hope-Dale. Approaching the Castle from this side, we descended to it with some difficulty. There was a melancholy grandeur about the view from the old walls that day; for a summer storm was blowing, and cloud-shadows, and mists, and sunshine were sweeping across and up and down the mountains—a magnificent phantasmagoria. It was a day that set the mind thinking involuntarily of by-gone times and the long-buried dead; and incidents in the lives of Scott and Byron presented themselves to our inner eyes with almost painful reality, as we peered down at the mouth of the Devil’s Cavern and the little inn and graveyard of Castleton, on either hand, below. . . .

“From Castleton we walked towards Miller’s Dale and Cressbrook, our path taking us through a tract of grey rock and green grass, peculiarly cold in colour, and desolate.

“Some painful, formless presentiment haunted me from time to time throughout these rambles—a sense as of the hovering of death somewhere near; a forefeeling of an inevitable separation to come;



a perception of the absolute isolation and loneliness of the individual, however he may flatter himself with the notion of an intimate communion with his fellow-man : and I remember most distinctly, as we sat and talked on this very theme, that dull afternoon, in a grassy hollow between grey rocks, on our way to Cressbrook, how I longed to grasp my companion and hold him to me—though I knew how vain even that was—so as to bridge over the gulf that seemed to yawn between our lives. Yet never were our sympathies more perfect than at that moment, and never had he proved himself sounder or more active in body than during our recent marches. Some scenes are more powerful than others to arouse thoughts like these, and among lonely mountains particularly the human form and spirit assume to the mind's perception a vagueness and unreality which are sometimes painful to excess. I can remember experiencing the same sensation—we both felt it—in the preceding summer, as we lay, he and I, one evening, on the northern slope of the great Sugarloaf Mountain, in Wicklow ; and I have felt it since among the Alps. But on this occasion it was for a time almost unbearable, and it could not fail to be remembered afterwards, and read by the light of events which followed. Perhaps it was this vague fear which made me more than ever careful to put a gentle restraint upon my

companion's adventurous activity at this time; though his extraordinary robustness and vigour made remonstrances seem ridiculous. That evening, in an endeavour to get by a short cut into Miller's Dale, avoiding the windings of the high-road, it became apparent that we should have to abandon our intention or leap down a sheer clifflet (or bank) of great depth; and I paused, and wavered, and, turning to Armstrong, said: 'I think I can leap this, but I incline to protest against your attempting it, remembering past mishaps.' 'I am not in the least afraid of it,' replied he, leaping into the air, knapsack on shoulder, and alighting all safe at the bottom. 'We have miscalculated the depth, and it will give you a very severe shock.' And so it did. But it wrenched him far less, I believe, than it did me, and, as I reflected on my recent chill forebodings, I thought that here was cause enough to make me laugh away all fears."

As the two rambled on through the Peak, they amused themselves by conversing, by mutual consent, in English hexameters and elegiacs—no very difficult accomplishment with a little practice; and, after wandering about the neighbourhood of Ashford and Bakewell, and visiting Haddon Hall and the gardens and galleries of Chatsworth, Armstrong penned the following descriptive epistle to his friend Mr. C\*\*\*\*\*:—

LETTER CIV. (*To G. A. C.*)—

“Devonshire Arms Inn, Ashford,

“Derbyshire, July 6, 1864.

“All my thoughts to-day, my friend, have persisted in jingling

In elegiac rhythm, rickety, rakish, and wry ;  
Which interfered very much with the orthodox pace of a walker,

Much with the peace of my mind, much with the strength of my wind.

Now, in attempting to roll out my usual gorgeous, prosaic,  
Broad, pictorial style, sumptuous pile upon pile,  
Mass upon mass of splendour, with music colossal and tender—

(That 's a Leonine verse—Longfellow could n't do worse !)  
In the attempt, I repeat, I am bothered and baffled and worsted ;

Words refuse to flow ; will shakes his head and says 'no !'  
Therefore you must be content to extract my meaning from metre—

(Snipe, I have heard it, suck sustenance thus from a bog.)  
All this livelong day we strolled and dawdled and maundered

Thro' deep-wooded dales down in the depths of the vales.  
Round are the rich green hills and round are the paunches of peasants,

Round are the ash and the beech, round is the tone of the speech,

Round are the Bakewell-puddings and faces of Derbyshire ladies,

Round are the streams and the Tors, round are the mouths of the caves ;

Whence we deduce that rotundity forms the typical beauty  
(Burke may have hit it before) of the voluptuous style.

Lovely is Haddon Hall, but far more lovely is Chatsworth—  
Age with youth compare, raven with silvery hair.

“Age is—respectable, truly ; but youth is noble and glorious ;  
 Haddon Hall is grey, Chatsworth is green as the May.  
 Alton Towers are grand, romantic, papistical, stately ;  
 Rare are the gardens there, tumbled down into a dell ;  
 Seat of Shrewsbury’s Earl. . . . .

. . . . .  
 . . . . .

Where we spent four hours, dazzled in mazes of flowers.  
 Here, in these bowers, be it known, I resolved to marry an  
 heiress—

(Only in vision, my friend—here let your laughter have  
 end.)

Here I resolved to write a poem and call it ‘The Heiress,’  
*In person* her spouse, blissfully blessing his vows.  
 Suddenly cometh a change, and the garden of roses is blighted,  
 And a shivering wind bitterly moans on the waste.  
 I will give to each subscriber a dozen of copies—  
 This by way of a bribe (delicate)—will you subscribe?

“Into Peveril Castle we climbed o’er a terrible chasm,  
 Hearing the jackdaws scream and the far voice of a stream.  
 Down in the blackness below, the horrible Cave of the Devil.  
 Swung ourselves over by trees, scratching our shins and  
 our knees.  
 Frowned on our left the thunder-scarred face of the Shivering  
 Mountain ;  
 Smiled on our right the vale commonly known as Hope-  
 Dale.

“In our rowdy hats we promenaded at Buxton ;  
 (Here I barked my legs on one of Guinness’s kegs.)  
 Much I inwardly laughed at gouty gentility ogling  
 Faded feminine flowers,—maids of apocryphal dowers.  
 Much I inwardly groaned at the ‘soothing’ glance of a widow.  
 (Tourist also she—on a professional tour.)

. . . . .

Have you ever perused Miss Seward’s Derbyshire novel?  
 Neither have I—it’s all blarney about Miller’s Dale.

Have you ever looked o'er the libretto of Cattermole's pictures?

So have I—it's all stories about Haddon Hall.

Have you ever delighted in *Peveril* by Sir Walter?

So have I—the romance much doth the country enhance.

"Jamque vale—I am very seedy and sleepy and weary—

G\*\*\*\*\* is dozing to sleep—sends his regards (true and deep).

Jamque vale. Morpheus sed enim mea lumina claudit.

Jamque vale—dormi (pleasantly), care caput!—*E. J. A.*"

A walk by Matlock and the Via Gellia ("Vi' Gillies") brought the two to Dovedale the following evening.

Arriving at Dovedale, they put up at the quiet little inn under Thorpe Cloud, calling itself "Peveril of the Peak Hotel," which Armstrong, before going to bed, described in these delightful lines:—

LETTER CV. (*To G. A. C.*)—

"Peveril of the Peak Hotel, Dovedale,

"Derbyshire,

"Thursday Evening, July 7, 1864.

"At mine ease in mine inn, in the valley of Izaak Walton—

Friend, I perceive my pen runs into verses again ;

Whether it be from the force of the olden classical habit

Here, five years gone by,<sup>1</sup> gently recurring to me,

Or from having been charmed by the *Bothie of Tober-na-vuolich*<sup>2</sup>

(Rather bewitched, you will say), truly I cannot aver.

<sup>1</sup> Referring to his visit to Derbyshire in 1859.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> Of Arthur Hugh Clough, as the reader will scarcely need to be reminded.—ED.

But, be that as it may, I revel in classical metres,  
 Though you may deem the sense moonshiny—well, let  
 it be !

“Sentiment broods on this inn ; the landlady looks senti-  
 mental—

Seems as though she had seen better and happier days ;  
 Mentions her terms with an air half hopeless and half un-  
 certain ;

Stricken in years, but neat, matronly, mournful, and sweet.  
 All the *ménage* appears to consist of the landlady's children ;  
 As the ‘concern’ does not pay, mournful and anxious are  
 they ;

Tending their seldom guests with a tremulous flutter, and  
 eager,

Painfully eager to gain credit and name for the house.  
 Possibly these poetic impressions may vanish to-morrow—

Ah ! very likely they will !—at the first sight of the bill.  
 Nevertheless, it is better to ooze all over with pathos,  
 Oily at every pore, than to be flinty and cold ;  
 Better a journey like Sterne's than the sharp-shooting tour of  
 a bagman ;

Better a gentle-souled muff than a sophisticate cad !

“This is the most enjoyable place I ever imagined ;  
 There a garden grows, fair with the pink and the rose.  
 Beautiful glen, wild stream, peaked hill, Arabian-Night-like ;  
 Corncrake out in the lea—capital muffins and tea.—

*E. J. A.”*

“We were awakened ” (the narrative concludes)  
 “on the morning of the 8th, as we lay in the inn at  
 Dovedale, by the swallows about the thatch-eaves,  
 whirling, with their shrill whistles like a score of  
 click-reels all paying out line together ; and we rose,  
 and walked in the delicious little garden, in the per-  
 fection of tranquil happiness, till the gentle house-

hold had prepared our breakfast. After breakfast we walked along the clear waters of the Dove, and in the valley of Ilam, till noon. Then we separated, each to enjoy his solitary musings and explore in what direction he pleased, agreeing to rendezvous at Ilam village at a certain hour in the evening, and, later, to ascend Thorpe Cloud together, for the sunset. I returned along the stream, and sauntered away far up the Dale ; and, as I walked, the same unaccountable anticipation of severance which had oppressed me on our way to Miller's Dale, began to visit me again, with an intense sadness, and I could not shake it off. As I approached Ilam in the evening, this feeling was suddenly wrought to the highest pitch by a curious phenomenon ; for, moving on slowly towards the village, and expecting to find Edmund somewhere by the roadside, I happened to look up towards the grassy peak above, and there on its edge appeared to my sight the dark shape of a man of superhuman proportions, in reclining attitude, extended hugely against the heavens. The outlines were those of Armstrong's figure, but the proportions were so enormous that a momentary feeling of absolute horror and alarm passed over me. Nor did either the illusion or the painful sensation abate until I had advanced several paces, and then they were dispelled simultaneously by the shout of the well-known voice from above, and the veritable Ed-

mund, in his natural altitude, hastening towards me down the slope. Of this phenomenon the only explanations I can offer are, first, that a peculiar state of atmosphere tended to magnify an object placed, relatively to my eye and to the sunlight, in the position in which Armstrong lay ; and, secondly, that the hill, which was peaked, and in form like lofty mountains with which I was familiar, was in reality much more diminutive than I had imagined, and my eyes had not had any opportunity of comparing its height with that of the ordinary human figure, when the two thus flashed before me unexpectedly and in juxtaposition at a moment when I was probably weary, and my vitality low. We discussed the incident together, and later in the evening found reason to attribute much of it to atmospheric causes ; for as we sat on the top of Thorpe Cloud, to enjoy the sundown, the god of day seemed to remain poised in precisely the same spot for such an extraordinary length of time that we began to imagine that he had suddenly changed his mind. and was determined to remain up for the night !”

These wanderings about Dovedale and the “ Happy Valley ” of Ilam, were to Armstrong, for months afterwards, a soothing and tranquillizing reminiscence, and he often paused to brood over that quiet, peaceful landscape, in wooing mental repose, when calmness of thought and feeling had become a vital necessity.



CHAPTER XIX. 1864, ÆT. 23—.

Quietude in T. C. D.—Extraordinary Productiveness.—  
Letter CVI. : “*The Bee* ;” *Longings for Leisure*.—  
“By Gaslight.”—“Studies of Certain Defined Characters.”—“September Equinox.”—Essay on Coleridge.—  
Gold Medal of the Historical Society.—Address to the  
Philosophical Society ; “The Visitors.”—Warm Eulogiums.—New Friends.—Reviews.

**I**T was not many weeks before he was back again in his rooms in Trinity College. In that calm season of the Long Vacation, when no bells boom or tinkle within the walls, and grass begins to peep up in the quadrangles, here and there, green and fresh as in Ferrara’s streets, he found his undisturbed solitude in the heart of the city very favourable to the work he had in hand ; and he wrote there much, as well in prose as in verse ; and, as his note-books manifest, read prodigiously. His Essay on Coleridge, his Address on *Essayists and Essay-Writing*,<sup>1</sup> together with a large number of his lyrical pieces, were among the produce of August, September, and October. He has frequently written four or even five lyrics a-day during this fertile period, and his note-books are a mingled mass of excerpts from

<sup>1</sup> See “Essays and Sketches.”—ED.



Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a list or inventory, written on a light-colored background. The text is arranged in several lines, with some words appearing to be underlined or separated by small marks. The handwriting is somewhat faded and difficult to decipher.



which the afflicted poet maketh answer :—)

There's money enough in good greenwood,  
 In sunshine and gay weather ;  
 There's money enough in two warm hearts  
 That glow and throb together.

There's money enough in a kindly smile,  
 In gentle loving laughter ;  
 There's money enough in a mind that broods  
 On the mystery of Hereafter.

proceedeth to testify that it won't do, in  
 this stanza :—)

The bee keeps buzzing within my brain,  
 It will not store its honey ;  
 It buzzeth continually,  
 Make money, fool, make money !'

the poet relapseth into that 'sweet and  
 noble' silence which is golden, and de-  
 with becoming modesty, the boisterous  
 of his friend.)

! will the day ever come when, unvext  
 by moils and tumults of this little world, I  
 can rate to my art a calm and trustful mind,  
 a repose, and a will subdued in the perfect  
 harmony to the one great Will that governs the

on the western slope of the Flagstaff  
 in the valley, one Sunday morning in the early  
 autumn, he said to me suddenly : " I know  
 a comfortable summer-house in the plant-

ing there across the wall ; you see its thatched top between the pines. As I want to write a few stanzas of a poem that has been on my mind for some time past, I think I'll just climb over, and shelter myself under its roof till I have disburthened my conscience and my brain. Sit up there among the rocks, and solace yourself with the view till I return. I shall not be many minutes." And with that he bounded over the wall. I went obediently up the hill a little way, and sat in the heathery hollows between the great granite ribs of rock for about ten or fifteen minutes—not more—when I heard his whistle from below, and over he came, with his note-book in his hand. "Here, sit down," he said, "and I'll read you my morning's work." And we sat down, and he read out the greater portion of the lines since known under the title "*By Gaslight*." ". . . I should have written more of it there," he said, as he closed the book, "only that, like our dilettante friend upon Parnassus, 'all my bones grew chilly,'"<sup>2</sup> or words to that effect. "Come along to the mountains." And, remembering the gentleness of the intruder and the benevolence of his purpose, I trust his trespass on that occasion may be forgiven.

<sup>1</sup> The first of the three poems which appear under that heading in the "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 364.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> See "The Critic," "Poetical Works" (New Edition), p. 425.—ED.

The group of poems known as *Studies of Certain Defined Characters* was, I think, completed about this time, the original group consisting of six "studies," two being contributed by another hand; and it may interest some readers to know that the first character in the series is a monstrous caricature of Armstrong himself; every weakness of which he was conscious, or wished to think himself conscious, being exaggerated in it to such a degree that, although every other picture in the group was recognized directly on its publication, I never knew any person who perceived that in this one he had been describing himself. But one of his most notable peculiarities was his tendency to form the lowest estimates of his own qualities and powers.

In September one of his most striking lyrics, one of the most imaginative of his poems, one which no mind except that of a poet could ever have conceived, was written amidst the elemental disturbances which it describes—the little piece headed "*September Equinox.*" His whole being was now in a state of extraordinary and almost preternatural tension; every breath, every sound, every shadow, every word uttered, every thought that flashed across his brain, caused his spirit to vibrate like a bell, to shrink or unfold itself like the most delicate of leaves.

In the beginning of November, the Session of the Historical Society of Trinity College was opened

with the usual public meeting in the Dining Hall, to which throng students, townsmen, and the dignitaries of the city. The Society was presided over by Sir Joseph (then Mr.) Napier, the ex-Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and then, as now, the Vice-Chancellor of the University ; who had established in the Society an annual gold-medal prize, to be awarded to the writer of the best essay on a specified subject. The subject for the year then current was "Samuel Taylor Coleridge," a theme so familiar and so dear to Armstrong that he had written an essay upon it, and sent it in. At this Opening Meeting of the Society, after he had been called up and presented with his Oratory Certificate, Sir Joseph Napier announced that among the essays sent in there was one of unusual merit, the characteristics of which he proceeded to describe in terms of warm admiration and emphatic eulogy ; and on his requesting the author to make himself known, Armstrong presented himself and was loudly cheered. Sir Joseph immediately begged to be allowed to retain the essay until he had shown it to various friends. It went round among intellectual circles in Dublin ; excited considerable interest in the author, and led many to form large expectations of his future achievements. And this feeling was still further extended on the 17th November, when it became his duty to open the Session of the Philosophical Society with a public Address.

That evening the chair was occupied by the late Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, Mr. Whiteside ; and the minutes of the meeting mention as among those present on the platform many remarkable men who are now no more—the late Sir William Rowan Hamilton, Astronomer Royal ; the late Sir William Wilde ; the late Bishop of Meath (Dr. Butcher) ; the late Bishop of Huron ; the late Dr. George Petrie, the well-known antiquary : and others, happily still amongst us—Sir Joseph Napier ; the Rev. Dr. Salmon, F.T.C.D. ; the Rev. Professor Jellett, F.T.C.D. ; and a large number besides, then or since eminent, Fellows and Professors of the University, judges, physicians, artists, literary men ; while the Hall was crowded with students and townsfolk ; and Armstrong's own nearest friends clustered close about the platform, to listen to the cadences of the voice which they had so often loved to hear in poem and in song, chanting or reciting, among the mountains or by the sea.

One of these friends, Mr. Chadwick, in the Memoir prefixed to the First Edition of the Poems, has described the delivery of the Address in such affectionate words, that, with his permission, I shall quote them here. “ The Address,” writes Mr. Chadwick, “ was delivered from memory, in a rich and modulated voice, with very characteristic abstinence from action, although at times his enthusiasm lifted his figure, swelled his tones, and

rested like a glory on his face." Ay, and men perceived that he was speaking from the very depths of his heart—there was no schoolboy effort at display likely to betray itself in *him*; no attempt to excite applause by clap-trap allusions to "the glories of Ireland," and empty recitations of great names; nay, if applause did come appearing to imply the presumption that any such desire might exist, he grew angry, his brow darkened, and he seemed as if he were trying to crush out the effort with his hands and his feet. At other times, as was always the case with him when he spoke, he forgot his audience, and his mind became rapt in the contemplation of the subjects of which he declaimed. When he sat down, again and again the applause was renewed, and those whom he represented, and the strangers before whom he spoke, seemed alike satisfied and pleased. A vote of thanks was moved to him by Sir Joseph Napier, and seconded by his much-respected college Tutor, Dr. Salmon, who alluded, in the kindest spirit, to his return to College after his long enforced absence, and to the honours he was winning in new fields. Professor Jellett and Sir William Wilde were the next to speak, and followed in the same friendly strain; and Sir William Rowan Hamilton rose and complimented him, and then amused the meeting with an account of Wordsworth's visit to "Edgeworthstown and the Observatory"—not to be forgotten by those who



heard and saw the poor old man on that occasion ; and, finally, a speech full of kind hearty praise from the ever-eloquent and ever-genial Chief Justice Whiteside, brought the proceedings to a close.

The favours now shown to Armstrong where favours were least expected, were very gratifying to him. His poems in manuscript, and several of his essays, were sought for, and circulated among the most cultivated intellects, and were everywhere joyfully greeted ; and the hopes they continued to awaken found clear utterance in many letters, of which the following, as coming from an author of repute but recently passed from amongst us, has for me at the present moment the deepest interest :—“It has given me,” writes Mr. S\*\*\*\*\*, “true pleasure to peruse them, not only for the subjects dealt with, but from the evidence they afforded me that there is a writer of prose and verse springing up amongst us who may fill up a gap, for some time too evident, in the roll of our native genius.” His Address, soon afterwards printed, was taken by Professor Craik and read out to his classes, and, as he wrote, “eagerly received.” It was mentioned by him to Sir Arthur Helps, to whom a copy was afterwards sent, at his request, to be acknowledged in most cordial words. Another gentleman, distinguished in literary circles, to whom Sir Joseph Napier introduced it in London, begged to be allowed to retain it, in order that

he might show it to Sir Henry Taylor ; and it was not long before Sir Henry himself wrote, heartily reciprocating the eulogiums it contained. It was reviewed in London with marked appreciation, and its public recognition there was followed by letters to the author from accomplished hands, seeking information as to where and how copies of it were to be obtained.

Meantime, he was busy with new lyrics and revisions, and exerting himself to expand and develop the Society which had honoured him by placing him at its head.

CHAPTER XX. 1864, ÆT. 23—.

Indisposition.—Retirement at Kingstown.—Letter CVII. :  
*Sighings for the South*.—Kind Friends.—Reviewing commenced.

THE winter of 1864-5 set in at Dublin with great severity—damp and cold, foggy and raw. Day after day arose sunless, followed by night after night of comfortless mist and chill. On one of these miserable nights, Armstrong, returning from dinner at Mr. Whiteside's, walked slowly back towards College, in conversation with some acquaintances, guests of the same genial host, with whom a half-hour's chat was too delightful to be rejected. He had neglected to muffle himself, and did not observe how greatly he was exposed to the bitter air. To that night-walk he traced the origin of a heavy cold which made itself felt a little later on. He presided at the meetings of the Philosophical Society until the commencement of the Christmas recess; but when the 15th of December, the last night of meeting, came, he seemed unaccountably flushed and nervous; and he rejoiced in being able to adjourn the proceedings till the following January; and hastened down to his father's residence at the sea-side, for clearer air, and rest, and nursing.

He had often declared his belief that he could not survive a very heavy attack of cold on the chest;

and, strange to say, since the deplorable accident of 1860, he had never had cause to complain of anything of the kind. For four years he had enjoyed, with the exception of some slight temporary checks, almost unbroken health, and he was now the picture of manly vigour and activity. When the cold fastened upon him—a slight attack of bronchitis—it seemed as if he would cast it off lightly and rapidly. Most of his friends were laid up also, some of them with much more alarming symptoms; everybody was suffering more or less from the abominable rawness of the weather; and the death-rate was running high. That he should suffer a little was to be expected; and his ailment was regarded as a trivial matter.

But days went on, and he sat in the house at Kingstown, looking over a grey, sunless sea; still unable to venture out. Before Christmas had come, his illness had shown so little evidence of abatement, that those who knew him intimately began to grow seriously anxious about him; and on the 30th of December, in reply to a letter alluding to a proposal of literary engagements from London, he took up his pen and wrote as follows:—

LETTER CVII. (*To G. A. C.*)—"Kingstown, 30 December, 1864.—My dear George,—Many thanks for your communication about \*\*\*\*\*, and for your kind wishes for my recovery. However, I am still perfectly incapable of excitement, action, or movement. I have really been most seriously and even

dangerously ill. Congestion of the left lung—the old complaint. . . .

“Of course if I can get the employment I will take it. But I am awfully weak and I’m afraid I’ll never be fit for much work and I do n’t know what’s to become of me and I wish I was a fruit-seller in Naples—I do, with all my soul! Hang conventionalities!

“A warm climate and comparative idleness is the only thing for me—of that I am religiously persuaded. A hard literary life would kill me in a year. A clerical life would kill me in six months. O for heat and dolce far niente! . . . Yours sadly,  
EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

The literary work which he had been asked to undertake was that of a contributor to a high-class weekly London review, of broad and congenial principles, which embraced among its supporters men whose characters he deeply respected, and to the permanent staff of which Sir Joseph Napier and Sir Frederick Pollock desired, with much kindness, to attach him. A letter from Sir Joseph Napier, soon afterwards received, was followed by his acquiescence; and, a book being sent him immediately by the editor for review, he set himself, ill though he was, to read and criticise it; and he speedily completed a critique, concluding it, at Sir Frederick Pollock’s friendly suggestion, with some fresh supplementary remarks on the Essay.

## CHAPTER XXI. 1865, ÆT. 23—.

Continued Illness.—Numerous Kindnesses.—Growing Fame.—Unexpected Recognition.—Tranquil Readings.—The Breton Melodies.—A True Friend.—Spiritual Vivisectors.—A Beautiful Faith.—Essay “On the Use and Abuse of Imagination in Religion.”—Letter CVIII.—*State of Health ; Occupations*.—Letter CIX. : *Repose*.—Wordsworth’s “Prelude.”—Gift from Sir Henry Taylor.—Peace.

AS the month of January wore on, he found himself still unable to move about, and, except for an occasional short drive, he was confined daily to the house. His debility was his worst foe, and this seemed hopelessly to increase. But as his weakness increased, in like measure all pain and all mental anxiety seemed to diminish, and except from a nervous excitability, which a small thing could arouse, he suffered little in mind or body. But this excitability, the companion of weakness, rendered the visits of his friends a source of danger to him ; and, eagerly as many desired to see him, they were obliged to limit their intercourse almost exclusively to letter-writing.

But if ever a sick man had cause to believe in the natural goodness of man’s heart, that cause existed

now. Almost every post brought him letters of kind inquiry, congratulations on recent achievements, eulogies of his poems, and prophecies of good things to come. Presents, too, to brighten his room or soothe his malady; fruits and flowers, the best the season yielded or preserved, were conveyed to him; and his brief Diary, traced in wavering characters, records with gratitude every letter and every gift.

Happily all this while he was not confined to bed for a single day, but was able to sit or recline in his sitting-room, overlooking the sea; or pace up and down, leaning on the arm he used to cling to so often in joyous walks among the mountains or in France; and the waters, with their scudding sails, and the moving clouds and gleams of winter sunshine, and the far-off purple headlands, were before him all day long.

He found himself obliged to fall back gradually upon books suggestive only of calm thoughts and tranquil scenes; and among those which he loved to read were Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler*, with Cotton's *Continuation*, recalling the mild delicious hours spent so recently in Ilam Valley and Dove-dale; the Gospel of John; Helps's *Friends in Council*; the *Essays of Elia*; portions of Coleridge's prose; and the poems of Wordsworth. More disturbing thoughts than these awakened he had not strength to bear.

Even the emotions of music, at first his greatest solace, at length began to prove too violent for him. Mr. Tom Taylor's *Ballads of Brittany* had just been obtained for him, a pleasing book of translations, with the music of some beautiful Breton melodies appended. One evening (I can never forget the scene), as the winter sun was setting, and the stormy sea was all alight with his splendour, I entered the house, and heard, above, the sad weird music of those Breton songs. When I opened the door of his room, I found him sitting there, listening and rapt, as his sister, at his bidding, played melody after melody. At last he could bear it no more; the thoughts of old days and beloved scenes, and dear faces far off, and all the visions that he had conjured up as he wrote in his loneliness the year before, came thronging in upon his mind with that mournful pathetic music; and the gathering gloom, and the sounds of the sea beneath him, and the disturbed feelings of those who were around him, were too much for his exhausted strength: his breath shortened, and he grew faint, and prayed to be left in silence and alone. And from that day he would hear no more music, and would seldom suffer any of his family, save two, to remain long in the room with him.

Of all those who were kind to him at this time the most assiduous was Sir Joseph Napier; and I wish here to record the deep sense of gratitude



which he cherished all through his illness to that gentlest and best of friends. Sir Joseph's friendship never failed—counsel, encouragement, little acts of attention as graceful as kind, flowed from him in an unbroken current day after day.

One species of well-meant offices, with which he was now for the first time made familiar, he could not with equanimity endure; namely, the professional probing of his religious feelings and opinions by the spiritual vivisector. Luckily he was not often troubled with much of this; but once or twice he was, and when his old and trusty friend Mr. Chadwick was admitted to speak with him subsequently, he expressed to him his indignation in emphatic and unmistakable words.

His theological opinions had undergone some slight modification in the course of his recent studies. He had hoped for arguments and light: he had been treated to nothing better than dogma. But in the main articles of his own renovated creed he reposed with unwavering hope and confidence—the omnipresence of a benevolent Creator, immeasurable, indefinable, but still existent and good; and the divine nature of Jesus Christ—the revelation of godhead in the highest conception of a perfect manhood. From these he drew measureless comfort and a vast exaltation. And the world indeed seemed to turn towards him now its sweetest, fairest, tenderest, and most peaceful features and

possessions, communicating nought but cheerful and elevating suggestions. Everything seemed to him to bear some message of infinite love. And, inasmuch as John's Gospel appeared to clothe the Vision in its subtlest and most imaginative raiment, and brooded upon the thought of a divine tenderness and mercy rather than upon the repulsive doctrines of damnation, he found in that book ineffable repose. Many questions, by some considered vital, he had put fearlessly aside ; and at the outset of his illness he had made up his mind—long tending as we have seen in that direction—to relinquish all idea of entering the Church. He longed for a freer and a broader life. These words I deem necessary as explanatory of the last letter that has been quoted, and of two that are to follow.

It was partly in consequence of a disturbance of his mental tranquillity by one of the probings aforesaid that, while he was so weak that he could with difficulty use his pencil, he wrote the following syllabus of an essay on the "Use and Abuse of Imagination in Religion." He had been accused by a robust ecclesiastic, who ought to have known him better, of an inordinate leaning to Romanism—*he!*—because he had happened to remark in that orthodox presence "that religious paintings often enable the mind to realize powerfully the incidents of the life of Christ!"—His regard for the

impugner made the accusation assume a greater importance than it otherwise would ; but the little sketch has now more than a fugitive interest :—

“The Use and Abuse of Imagination in

“Religion.—

“ 1. Theoretical—Spiritual. 2. Practical.

“ Uses in Matters of Religion.

“ 1. Elevates the mind to things unseen.

(Wordsworth. Sonnet prefixed to the *White Doe*.)

“ 2. A man of dull imagination will be a bad reader of History.—Helps the mind to realize the life, passion, &c., of Christ ; the characters of his companions and disciples ; the customs, the peculiarities, the scenery, &c. ; so that one man who reads the sacred story once has a more vivid conception of it as a whole and in its details than another who has dutifully pored over it for years, and picked up a few seeds of doctrine.

“ 3. Helps us to apprehend in some far off way the power and glory of God. We dip never so lightly into astronomy, botany, zoology, geology, or any of the physical sciences, and our imaginations aid us in framing (to however limited an extent) some conception of the vastness, the mechanism, the perfection, &c., of God’s universe.

“ 4. In prayer—The imagination of highest culture ‘seeth not God at any time’—We pray to God as to a Father, but the matured imagination would know itself to be diseased, if it fell so low as to conceive visually of Him. But the Only Begotten Son, perfect man as well as God,—we picture up his human form, and, each according to his piety and the purity of his mind, we see before us the most pitying, the most sympathizing, the most loving, the most divine face and form we can think of.

“ 5. Christ spoke mostly in parables and in *metaphors* ; the faculty from which these figures spring is the imagination ; a cultured imagination (*i. e.* one familiar with the

thoughts and modes of the poets) will readily find out the meaning and detect the sequence of the thoughts.

“6. Assists in the interpretation of prophecy. A cultured imagination together with sound sense and a strong reason, are not only the best faculties for this difficult task, but the *only* ones in the smallest degree justifiable in the attempt ; as I shall prove.

“7. Faith, in a measure, is based upon this faculty. Analysis of Faith.

“8. Hope—as proved by analysis.

“9. The Spiritual Charity—analysis. (See G. F. A. on ‘Imperfect Sympathies.’)

“10. Paintings of Christ and his disciples by the Masters, considered. These (observe) are the conceptions of the greatest and most cultured imaginations. De Quincey’s note on Lessing’s *Laocoon*, in my extracts.—(One of the strongest arguments against Romanism. Why did the priests *allow* the worship of these pictures ?)

“11. Art—Cathedrals, and Religious Architecture in general.

“12. The Religious Poem.

“13. ‘The noblest kind of imaginative power in one’s soul, that of living in past ages ; wholly devoid of which power, a man can neither anticipate the future, nor even live a truly human life, a life of reason in the present.’”

The month of January had now passed over wearily ; and not a murmur had escaped his lips. For the future he was not without most hopeful plans, and a thorough unbroken devotion to literature, and especially to the art he loved, seemed growing into an unquestionable possibility. He talked pleasantly of living together at Hampstead in mild seasons, and in winter on the shores of the Mediterranean ; and his imagination was already

building up great dreams which he hoped ere long to embody in verse. Sir Joseph Napier's well-meant cautions about certain ills besetting a life too exclusively devoted to poetry were received and responded to with the moderation and respect which they merited ; but those who knew him know how much self-repression he used in speaking thus cautiously and coldly of the fixed passion and one unfailing solace of his life. In the early part of February he showed some symptoms of returning strength, *felt* better, and wrote thus cheerfully to his friend, then also in ill-health :—

LETTER CVIII. (*To the Rev. George A. Chadwick.*)—" *De Profundis*, 7 Feb., 1865.—My dear George,—I am very sincerely sorry that you are so ill ; but I trust it is only a cold, and that you will be able to resume your work of good very shortly. But if you have a delicate chest, beware of this season, which has already slain its thousands.

"I am writing on a book supported on my lap, being too weak or too comfortable to contemplate the exertion of getting up and sitting at the table. *Awful* weak, old boy—I have to be helped into bed and out thereof. And yet slowly, very slowly I feel myself getting stronger. Thank God, I am perfectly patient, and leave the time of my restoration with confidence to Him.

"g = small G told me you would swopp (?) some book or books for L\*\*\*'s Lies about In-

spiration. Readily would I swap (??) that detestable tome for a collection of nursery rhymes. So, if you wish for the sanctimonious-looking volume, send me what you please, and the swshoppe (???) will be sure to delight me.

“I think your verses are very good ; but they are much too wild to suit my present taste. On account of physical causes, I have resolutely reined in all my passions, a result difficult of accomplishment in my case, but attained nevertheless, by prayer as the first great agency ; and, secondly, by such means as quietly reading St. John’s beautiful Gospel, and then Wordsworth’s calming and elevated words, and again the prose of Coleridge, and lastly the tranquil thoughts of Arthur Helps (from whom, by the way, I got a letter thanking me for and complimenting my Address).

“Hoping you will rapidly get over your ugly attack, I remain, my dear George, ever yours most truly, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG.”

One of his principal anxieties at this time was for the welfare of the Society of which he was President, and he felt great compunction at the thought of his long absence from it, urgently desiring explanations to be made to the members on his behalf at each successive meeting. But the one thought which troubled him most was the thought that he was wearying those who tended him ; and his gratitude to them for little kindnesses was unbounded.

On the 13th of February he wrote to Sir Joseph Napier the following account of his occupations and feelings :—

LETTER CIX. (*To the Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Napier, Bart.*)—"Kingstown, 13 Feb., 1865. . . . I hope you will forgive me my long silence. I have been suffering chiefly from nervousness, the result of complete physical prostration. Thank God, my lungs are undergoing a rapid healing process. But I am still wretchedly weak.

"I send you the ——— of this week, in which you will find my review. Mr. Pollock said in a letter to me that he liked it very much.

"I wonder what I shall get next to review and when I shall get it.

"I have been reading all sorts of books lately—Spenser, Robert Browning, Isaak Walton, Ruskin, Tom Taylor's Songs and Ballads of Brittany (a province which has a peculiar fascination for me), and the 'Notes on English Divines' and 'Hours of Quiet Thought' which you so kindly lent me. With regard to the last book, I think it is more pious than clever; but the piety shines so warmly as to preclude all thoughts of mere cleverness or genius. It seems to me that the 'Spiritual Function of Nature' is the best essay in the book, and next to that, 'The silence of Christ under his sufferings.'

"I shall send these books by my brother in a

few days, with many sincere thanks for the gratification they have afforded me. I am still poring over St. John with delight, and would gladly accept your kind offer of Alford's notes, if you are not using them at present. My brother would bring the volume down.

"I find I have nothing more to write, except merely to say that throughout this long and exhausting illness I seem to see the broken outline of a vast purpose for my good. Little indications I perceive every day. And the great blessing seems to be the total withdrawal from the world, and the strong sense of utter dependence which has thrown me into the arms of Christ.—I remain, . . yours sincerely, EDMUND J. ARMSTRONG."

From this time his weakness seemed again to advance, and though the attack on his chest was reported as subdued, it became too evident that he was not making any substantial progress.

The days went over ; and still he sat in his room ; looking over the sea ; reading ; jotting down occasional notes ; conversing at times on cherished topics, in sentences broken with frequent pauses ; often, silent, holding his mother's hand, as if that were some safe anchorage in a wide and shoreless sea ; often convulsing his companions with uncontrollable laughter by his irresistible fun—a twofold agony to them.

On the 23rd of February he kept his bed during



the day for the first time throughout all his illness. He was exceedingly weak, but more tranquil, more absolutely happy in his moods, than those about him had ever known him, and so playful and so droll as to make sadness and anxiety in his presence all but an impossibility.

Throughout the day, as he sat up in his bed, he had been reading the *Prelude* of Wordsworth, and the marker still remains at the spot where he had left off when he closed the volume—the beginning of Book Fourteenth. In the afternoon he received a very pleasant surprise. One of Sir Henry Taylor's scarcer volumes, a gift with the poet's autograph, and a kind and flattering note, were laid in his hands. His face brightened with indescribable pleasure as he opened the book and read his own name and Sir Henry's together on the fly-leaf; and he sat long, with the volume on his knees, dipping into its pages from time to time; and then put it aside with an air of supreme happiness. Later on, as he sat propped up with his pillows, his life-long companion took leave of him for the night. He nodded with the old merry, loving look upon his beautiful face, saying he was perfectly comfortable and that no one could be happier; and he nodded again, and kissed his hand playfully.

Towards dawn of the next day (the 24th), at the first trill of the robins and the thrushes outside his window, he awoke from a quiet sleep, and mur-

mured to his mother, who sat watching by his bedside, "Where are they all?" (naming his father and sister and brother successively); "why are they not here?"—His mother answered, "Dear, it is not daylight yet! They are all asleep." "O, yes, of course," he said. But by-and-by he murmured once more, and now with a touch of his old fun, "Where are they all? What do they mean by leaving a fellow by himself all this time?" And his mother asked, "Shall I call them, dear? Do you *wish* them to come?"—"Ah, no," he said, "do n't!" And then he dozed again, and so passed gently into a deeper slumber.

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There is little more to tell; but the life of such a man does not cease, though the lips be silent, and the hands have rest from their labours.

He was laid in the little ancient churchyard of Monkstown, in the County Dublin, not far from the grave of those heroic seamen whose death, in that very month three years before, he had celebrated in touching requiem.<sup>1</sup> The two societies of his College, the Historical and Philosophical Societies, having adjourned their meetings out of respect to his memory, sent deputations to represent them there. Numbers of his fellow-students went down from Dublin that morning, and followed on foot

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 308.—ED.

from the house at Kingstown to that place of rest, in mournful procession. The brightest intellects of his University assembled there to testify the esteem in which they held him. Many young faces bent over his grave ; and men old and grey-haired, who had learned to love him for his pure heart and golden promise ; and his closest bosom-friends, the light of his glorious being still lingering about their lives. His old friend and correspondent, Mr. Chadwick, stood among these. He had been asked to speak some words, for he had known his intellectual life so well. He came forward with a heavy heart, and spoke in touching, unpremeditated eloquence. " In an outer circle, or in an inner," he said, " as acquaintances, friends, relatives, we all knew him who is no more. We all respected, most of us loved him well : he had no enemies. Many who never had spoken with him desired his friendship ; and our University watched his career with hope and growing pride. But none knew his real value who knew him not in private life. Many of you remember his prospects when he entered College ; his high classical attainments, the bright career that opened before him then ; and how God in His providence arrested him ; sent him to a strange land ; and held him for weeks in the balance between death and life ! . . . Lately we saw him again in our first ranks, full of honour and of hope, and acknowledged on all sides as he deserved. And this is the

end of it all ! . . Little satisfaction this day, little comfort to his mourning friends, in his genius and eloquence and honours ; little even in his blameless life and loving heart ; for these are only additions to their causes of profound regret. Sooner or later all who run the same race must come to the same goal. Think whether at that hour we and ours would not exchange all such memories for others that perhaps we are not storing up. It was otherwise with the heart that is so early still. In sickness, when his past hopes were newly withered, and the future was a confused and gloomy whirl, he braced himself for the conflict with fears and difficulties that were darker than all beside. . . . Let us not call such doubt sinful, since it pointed to a careful and genuine inquiry, not the flippant rejection for which passion so often cries. Indeed, his affections were convinced before his judgment ; he believed with the heart earlier than with the head, and felt deeply (as I know) that the alternative of faith to him was not liberty but desolation. Let the result cheer all who are working honestly, but in the gloom. . . . His paramount desire was to serve God and man, and the success for which he anxiously toiled was the accomplishment of extensive good."

To all those who mourned him, among whom he had been so lately an animating presence, it seemed as if it were not decreed that the fair fruits of a life

of activity so noble should in anywise perish. It was resolved by the Historical and Philosophical Societies to establish some Memorial of him ; and, the desire being general that his writings should be more widely diffused and circulated, it was proposed that, with the sanction of his relatives, the Memorial should take the appropriate form of the publication of a selection from these. Many wished to possess his various Essays ; but the Poems were a riper product, and their publication was more strictly in accordance with his own immediate design. The old friends of his boyhood divided with me the labour of copying his manuscripts. Surely never was man loved more loyally by his fellow-men than he was loved ! As the year rolled on, evidences of the regard in which he had been held continued still to flow in. Letters from old schoolmates, long absent, well-nigh forgotten, came, breathing the warmest affection, the tenderest regret. Letters, too, from honoured men among whom his name had just begun to be known, his genius to be recognized. And all encouraged the work which so many had at heart. "We never met," wrote Professor Craik, "but I held him in the highest regard, not only for his brilliant powers, but for a moral nature, as beautiful as I have ever known in anyone, which lighted up every sentence of the communications which I had the happiness of receiving from him in what I so little thought at the time was to be the

last year of his existence in this world. I treasure up as very precious the last note, more especially, that I had from him, written, I believe, only a few days before he was taken from us." And then of his poems:—"I have always regretted that I never told him in distinct and strong enough language the great admiration with which I read *The Prisoner of Mount Saint Michael*. I always hoped that we should meet, when I might have expressed myself with greater frankness and fulness. But he was not forgotten in my communications with my friends, either in writing or by word of mouth. I am very thankful that that poem is to be printed."

The volume of his Poems appeared early in the following November. The Opening Meeting of the Session of the Historical Society took place immediately afterwards, and then the late Chief Justice Whiteside, after having referred to the recent death of Sir William Rowan Hamilton, spoke of the Poet in warm and generous words:—"There is another gentleman," he said, "a member of this University, whose name should be mentioned in eulogistic terms, and received with that profound respect which is due to his genius and his virtues—I mean Edmund John Armstrong. He was a man of uncommon ability and undoubted talents, which gained for him the respect and the love of all who had the honour of knowing him. His brethren of the Historical Society have paid him the best tribute

that could be paid to such an ornament of his College ; they have contributed to publish his writings to the world. . . . Though his life was short, yet his time was so spent and his abilities so distinguished that he has entitled himself to the respect and gratitude of posterity." And these sentiments were echoed on the same platform by the late Master of the Rolls (Mr. Walsh), the response of a large and brilliant audience proving the reality of a wider sympathy. A few nights later the annual Opening Meeting of the Philosophical Society was held also in the University, and his successor in office alluded to his loss in fervent and graceful language :—" Our last Session was opened by Edmund Armstrong with an eloquence we shall not soon forget, and before the year of office closed his voice was stilled. It is not for me to dwell upon the feelings aroused by his untimely death, nor, in this place, to render to his worth that tribute which friendship and admiration long to pay ; but I should forget my first and saddest duty, at this our annual meeting, did I not give expression to your deep sorrow and my own. While, with all that knew him, we lament the loss to literature of his genius, cut off in the first brightness of its opening summer, more than others we, his comrades, mourn his generous sympathies and manly heart. Happily the rich promise which he gave of literary greatness is not altogether buried in his early grave ; he

has left us in his writings a memorial worthy of him—a proof that his labours, if short, were fruitful ; and these reliques, at our suggestion and that of the Historical Society, have just been published. Let us then hope, though our late President has now been taken from us, that the spirit which animated him may still guide our proceedings and elevate our pursuits. The ardent search for truth, the clear conception of beauty, the fervent love of nature, the deep religious sentiment, which formed the key-note of his character and furnished the motives of his life, will still be with us in his Poems, to cheer us when faint, to check us when imprudent, to assist us in difficulty, to warn us in danger, ever influencing us, as his counsels would have done, for good ; for of minds and hearts like his has the poet truly written—

. . . . ‘They do not die,  
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,  
Nor change to us, although they change !’ ”

To these words of the President Sir J. Napier then added his affectionate tribute : “I trust,” he said, “that the beautiful volume which has now been published will adorn the literature of his country, and tend to keep alive in our hearts the memory of one of model earnestness, of model sobriety, and of true genius.” . . . And the praise thus spoken within these Societies was immediately afterwards endorsed by the head of the University. “I cordially agree



with the Memorial Committee," wrote Provost Macdonnell, "that Mr. Armstrong's poems are a high credit to our literature and our University; and," he continued, "no nobler compliment could be paid to [his] works than the strong interest felt for his name and memory by two such distinguished Societies as the Historical Society and the Philosophical Society"—a fact of which none were more truly sensible than those to whom his name and memory were most dear.

Outside his University and the city where he was best known, the reception of his Poems was, except in one or two insignificant and contemptible instances, equally cordial and appreciative. Men whose names are associated with all that is fairest and best in modern literature, to whose hands the book was carried by sympathetic friends, men whose praise must be ever memorable and precious, were quick to perceive the throbbing of the warm heart beneath the music of his lines, and to welcome him into the narrow circle of the singers who are entitled to sing. Among such there was none whose words were read with a livelier interest than those of Dean Milman, then old, and yet with the recollections of the glorious dawn of nineteenth-century literature still fresh in his mind. "I can fully understand," wrote the venerable author of *Fazio*,—"the enthusiastic love which his character and abilities awakened among his youthful friends

at the University of Dublin, and the proud fondness with which a brother dwells upon his memory. And then he speaks of "gratitude" for the "pleasure he had derived from the rich and copious imagery, the harmony, and, above all, the noble and pure thoughts and feelings which *pervade* the poems."

A pile of letters lies before me, some from men who are still in our midst, some from writers who have passed away, and each one a priceless possession to me. I open one of the latter group, because it bears upon the cover the well-loved name of Charles Kingsley. In February of 1866 this letter came to me unexpectedly. "I knew [his] name," writes Canon Kingsley, "as a most distinguished and promising man. . . . I have somewhere a letter which I wrote to him about his Address on 'Essays,' which I never sent. . . . Little I thought when I wrote it that his splendid career would so soon end." . . . And little did he of whom he speaks foresee that ever such honour would be paid to *his memory* by this man, for whom he entertained so much affection and respect—the author of *Hypatia* and *Westward Ho!*

But among all the criticisms passed upon his character and his works in public or in private, by men living or now dead, none will remain of such perdurable worth as that of M. Sainte-Beuve, because none could have come from a critic so consummate. Gracefully and tenderly, and with

delicate and faithful touches, the genial, penetrative poet-critic wrote :—"I have derived a melancholy pleasure from seeing live before me that young figure of a poet so distinguished, so precociously endowed in every respect. . . . He will have his place to himself, it seems to me, in that group, immortal and pathetic, of the Kirke Whites, the Keatses ; and his young star will continue to shine before the eyes of all who study English poetry." . . .

May that "young figure" so dwell in the hearts and imaginations of all who read his Poems or this book ; and may the fair prophetic words of the good old critic find literal fulfilment !

THE END.

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